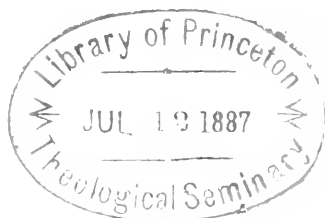


V. G. FAITHFULL.



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THE
BRITISH PULPIT:

A COLLECTION OF

SERMONS

BY

THE MOST EMINENT DIVINES

OF THE PRESENT DAY.

IN SIX VOLUMES.

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CONTENTS.

SUBJECT.	TEXT.	PREACHER.	PAGE
The Walk of Faith a Way of Pleasantness and Peace.....	Proverbs, iii. 17.	REV. J. H. EVANS, A.M.	1
The Accountableness Incurred by the Ministry of the Gospel	2 Cor. ii. 15, 16 ..	S. ROBINS, A.M.	13
Serving the Lord Christ	Coloss. iii. 23, 24..	H. MELVILL, B.D.	25
The Children of the World and the Children of Light	Luke, xvi. 8.	T. DALE, A.M.	41
The Earthly Tabernacle and the Heavenly Inheritance	2 Cor. v. 1	F. W. MEADOWS	53
The Claims of Ireland	{ Luke, i. 33	W. H. COOPER	65
	{ 1 Cor. xv. 25 .. }		
Hearers Judged by Sermons.....	John, xii. 47, 48 ..	H. MELVILL, B.D.	85
Christ Manifested to Destroy the Works of the Devil	1 John, iii. 8	T. B. BAKER, A.M.	101
Believers Complete in Christ	Coloss. ii. 10	J. SHERMAN	121
The Tares of the Field	Matt. xiii. 36—44	F. ELLABY, A.M.	131
The Church a Testimony for God to the World	Isaiah, xliii. 12 ..	T. BINNEY	141
The Beatitudes—Evidences of Poverty of Spirit.....	Matt. v. 3.....	J. RUDGE, D.D.	151
God's Goodness Recalled to Mind.....	Jer. iii. 19.....	HON. & REV. B. W. NOEL, A.M.	159
The Lord the Christian's Inheritance	Deut. x. 9.....	REV. H. HUGHES, A.M.	169
The Minister's Farewell Entreaty	Ephesians, iv. 1—6	T. MORTIMER, B.D.	180
The Best Gifts of God Bestowed on his People	Gen. xlvii. 5, 6 ..	J. H. EVANS, A.M.	189
Sorrow for the Departed Vindicated	Luke, viii. 52	J. W. PEARSON, A.M.	201
Every Baptized Man a Priest of God.....	1 Peter, ii. 9	H. MELVILL, B.D.	213
The Renunciation of Evil Habits Contemporaneous with the Application for Mercy	Isaiah, i. 16—18 ..	HON. & REV. B. W. NOEL, A.M.	229
The Kingdom of God and His Righteousness	Matthew, vi. 33 ..	REV. T. MORTIMER, B.D.	239
Unspirituality, its Signs, Evils, and Remedy	John, iv. 24	S. ROBINS, A.M.	245
Christian Doctrine, Duty, Privilege, and Hope.....	1 John, ii. 24, 25..	T. MORTIMER, B.D.	257
The Minister's Parting Prayer	Judges, xvi. 28	265
The Nature and Design of a Divine Revelation.....	Luke, i. 70	J. BLACKBURN	273
The Character Described in the Seventh Chapter of the Romans.....	Rom. vii. 22—25..	J. LEIFCHILD	286
Sermon to Sunday-School Children	Psalms xxxiv. 11 ..	J. SHERMAN	300
The Concurrent Testimony of the Spirit and the Believer.....	Romans, viii. 16 ..	H. MELVILL, B.D.	309
God Honouring the Righteous	1 Samuel, ii. 30 ..	T. MYERS, A.M.	325

SUBJECT.	TEXT.	PREACHER.	PAGE
The Claims of England upon Christians, and Specially upon Churchmen	1 Peter, iv. 10	REV. J. WILLIAMS, A.B.	335
The Spiritual Nature of True Religion	—— ii. 5	—— J. BURNET	345
Fellowship with Christ	Philippians, iii. 10	—— A. POPE	356
"Called" of God	Romans, viii. 30 ..	—— J. SHERMAN	365
The Believer's Present Ignorance and Fu- ture Illumination	1 Cor. xiii. 12	—— T. DALE, A.M.	381
The Missionary's Message Suited to All ..	Acts, xvi. 32, 33 ..	HON. & REV. G. T. NOEL, A.M.	393
Yielding Ourselves unto God	Romans, vi. 13 ..	—— B.W. NOEL, A.M.	405
The Beatitudes—Persecution for Righteous- ness' Sake	Matthew, v. 10 ..	REV. J. RUDGE, D.D.	417

THE BRITISH PULPIT.

THE WALK OF FAITH A WAY OF PLEASANTNESS AND PEACE

REV. J. H. EVANS, A.M.

JOHN STREET CHAPEL, KING'S ROAD, JULY 9, 1836.

"Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."—PROVERBS, iii. 17.

THE wisdom of God plainly shows itself in the consideration of those ways which he has marked out in his word, and in which he leads his people to walk ; even his own ways—*wisdom's* ways, so called, because they are designated and marked out by infinite wisdom and because they who walk in them, are they who alone are wise in God's sight.

You remark in this passage, that they are termed, "ways of pleasantness, and paths of peace." "Her ways"—wisdom's ways—"are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." It is not said, "Wisdom's *way* is a pleasant way," but "wisdom's *ways*"—various ways ; and not merely that "her paths are peace," but "*all* her paths are peace." Blessed truth ! none of wisdom's ways but are the ways of pleasantness, and paths of peace.

In the consideration of this subject, I shall regard it in a threefold point of view. I shall, in the present sermon, speak of wisdom's ways more immediately referring to the way and walk of *faith*. If I am spared for two Lord's-days to come, I shall then, on the first, speak of the way of *repentance* as a way of pleasantness ; and, lastly, the way of *filial obedience* as a way of pleasantness and peace also. In this sermon, I shall confine my mind and your attention to one point, namely, that the way and walk of faith is a way of pleasantness and a path of peace May

the Holy and Eternal Spirit graciously lead us into such a holy contemplation of his truth as shall be for our edification, the manifestation of the divine glory, and the exaltation of our beloved Lord who is our only hope.

In considering this subject, I shall, in the first place, observe, why it is that all the ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace; and, secondly, I shall endeavour to show (and this will more peculiarly and especially refer to faith) why it is that the walk of faith is pre-eminently a way of pleasantness, and a path of peace.

With regard to the first point, if it be asked, why we should think that the ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness and peace, it is because they are the appointment of an infinitely tender Father for his covenant children to walk in. Surely if infinite love has originated it, and infinite wisdom has devised it, and infinite power has achieved it, then the way must be a way of pleasantness, and a path of peace.

It might have been that all the path-way of the traveller towards Mount Zion might have been full of bitterness; it might have been devoid of comfort, peace, joy, delight: and even if it were so, we reduce the world to a low point when we say, we should have been worse than fools not to walk in the way of safety: for if our path be a path of safety—if there be no other safety but in this path—yea, if all others be paths of inevitable ruin and destruction, then the true wisdom which God imparts would induce them to walk in these paths, even if there had been no pleasure in them—if all had been bitter, if all had been dark, if all had been cheerless—if there had been no rest, no quietness, no enjoyment in them. But infinite wisdom has designed it otherwise; for the ways that begin in this world, are ways that shall never end; they are openings of what shall be, the commencement of *eternity*.

My dear hearers, hell has its buddings in *this* world. We live in such soft days, that for a man to speak much of hell offends many. Why are not such ashamed of God's word, and the Lord Jesus Christ himself? for this I will say—never did I hear or read such awful statements as came from the lips of Jesus, and never so much in any sermon on the subject as in some of his sermons. Hell, I say, with awe on my mind, and, I trust,

with some feeling of compassion towards those of you who see not the tendency of your own ways—hell has its buddings *here*; the aching heart, the restless mind, the perpetual disappointment, the dread of the soul, the misgivings of the conscience, and the anticipations at times of what shall be, the fear of looking into it—that awe on the mind that sometimes makes a man who can smile in health, look very pale when he is upon his sick-bed—that state of mind which can make a man, who can trifle and laugh in the midst of a laughing world, tremble in the very anguish of his soul, when he looks eternity in the face: these things, I say, are the beginnings of what shall be. They are like the faint distant flash, so indistinct and feeble as scarcely to be noticed at the first; but by and bye it lightens up every object; and then comes the thunder, deep, awful, and terrible. There is such a thing as the commencement of what shall be in the midst of a poor dying world.

And heaven has its openings too. This at once detects you whose religion just lies on the surface. The peaceful mind, the heart that rests in the love of God, the conscience sprinkled with the precious blood of atonement, the will that lies passive in the hands of the Father, or would desire to do so: these form some little openings of what shall be—foretastes of what shall be; these are the little beams of the future day of glory, where night shall never come.

Now infinite wisdom hath designed this, and infinite power accomplished it: and if conscience were faithful, every one at this moment would have the witness at this moment whither he is going. I say not as to the dark unfoldings of what the mind of God shall be; I speak not of the mysteries of his secret counsel; because not one of his redeemed shall be left in Egypt—not one of his ransomed ones shall be lost. But, I say, in yourselves there is enough at this present moment to assure you whither you are going, if the light of heaven shone in upon your consciences, and made you faithful as before God. The infinite wisdom of Jehovah has given his saints some little commencements in this poor world: and, therefore, I say, if infinite love could conceive it, and infinite wisdom could devise it, and infinite power could achieve it, we might well expect that “wisdom’s ways” would be “ways of pleasantness, and all her paths peace.”

There is another point of view in which I would consider it. It is pleasant to walk in those ways which those who have tried and walked in them before us have found pleasant. Could we have the testimony of God's saints on earth, could we collect their testimony into one, could we concentrate their witness, could we bring them all to one focus and one point, they would all give us this one testimony:—I found the ways often mysterious, dark, and painful; I found them often a great deep: but this I say still, the real happiness of my soul is in them, and no real happiness is out of them. And when we think of the pure spirits made perfect; when we think what their testimony would be—clear, lucid, direct, without the least infringement or diminution—with one voice bearing testimony to this truth, we may, indeed, believe that wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths peace.

Did not the apostle Paul find it so when he was on earth? "I know in whom I have believed:" "I *know* it." "O how I love thy law," says David; "thy testimonies are my rejoicing more than fine gold." What did Jeremiah say? "Thy words were found, and I did eat them, and they are the rejoicing of my heart." If we could look at those who are gone, if we could look at those who are present, if we could collect the testimony of all into one point, we should have but one evidence, that "wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Perhaps, some of you have parents who walked in this way before you. They knew what it was to "water their couch with their tears;" they knew what it was to plead with God on your behalf; they knew what it was to walk closely with God, and to realize the power and substance of truth in their own hearts. My dear young friends, you who are just rising into life, it is a happy thing if you are led to walk in ways which you find to be pleasant, and in paths which you experience to be peace.

But, above all, there is this consideration: Those paths must be pleasant and peaceful in which the Lord Jesus Christ has gone before us. Of course he has not taken out trial and chastisement from the path; he has not taken out affliction, and poverty, and sickness from the path; he has not even taken out death, that last dread foe, from the path: but, having a regard to our interests for an eternal world rather than to our comfort in the present life, he has done far more and better for us than this, he has taken

out all *curse* from the path, and turned all these trials into mercies. The very grave is perfumed by him: the path that we walk in is marked by his boundless love, and the steps that we take are consecrated by his blessed example. Though you know what trials are, and what sufferings are; yet it is sweet for you to look on the print of his Divine footsteps, and lean upon him all the way.

But observe, secondly, that the PATH OR WALK OF FAITH IS IN ITSELF A MOST HAPPY WALK. Faith looketh to Jesus; and as it looks upon Jesus, it walks in a pleasant path, rests upon him for wisdom: He is our wisdom. My dear hearers, ours is oftentimes a dark and mysterious way: it is always a straight way, though it is sometimes a rough and painful way: and you who are running smoothly in a summer path, if you meet with an experienced saint who is tasting the bitter things of life, he will not say to you, "I envy you." But how great and how inestimable is the mercy of having a guide to our feet in such a way; one who can cheer us when we sink, comfort us when we faint, lift us up when we despond, restore us when we are going out of the way, bind up that which is broken, enter into all our trials, sympathize in all our sorrows, and having the wisdom that knoweth how to deliver the timid out of all their temptations.

It is not only wisdom which we look to, but it is the wisdom of tender sympathy; and this path is, therefore, a most happy, peaceful, blessed path. I open my heart to my friend; I tell him my sorrows: he listens to me—mourns as I mourn, weeps as I weep: I bless God for it; it is very sweet to have such a friend. Again I tell him my sorrows: he is still enabled to sympathize with me; he weeps as I weep, he mourns as I mourn: it is very sweet, and I bless God for it. I tell him again of my sorrows, and I find him occupied; he has his own cares, his own sorrows, and troubles, and vexations; they are quite enough for him; he is scarcely able to go on in his own path: how then can I expect him to take my place, and stand where I stand? It is beyond man. But supposing he is willing to do this, what can he do? He can mourn with me, and sympathize with me, but can he deliver me? But it is not so with our heavenly Friend to whom we look; who says, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they

his members shall sink beneath them. He is not only one who can sympathize, but one who can deliver, who knows how to deliver, and when to deliver; one who, by means as contemptible as blowing of ram's horns, can bring down our greatest troubles, and place our feet firm in our path.

But still further: supposing I had a friend who could sympathize and could deliver—who could not only weep and mourn with me, but find a way of escape for me. Sometimes God does, in his mercy, work by tender sympathizing friends a real deliverance; but when I look at him, I reason thus: This dear friend, this beloved friend, this self-denying friend, must *die*; the hand I take must soon be cold in death; he will soon pass away, and I shall see him no more. But when I look at Jesus, I look at one who never dies—one who has enough of tenderness and sympathy, and one who has enough of *life* for time and for eternity. O, my dear hearers, you who, when trouble comes, endeavour to avoid it by change of scene, going to the sea-side, trying this friend and that friend; poor wretched creatures, I must call you, for resting your souls upon such broken reeds, which one moment may annihilate and reduce to nothing.

Thus we have the advantage over the poor lovers of the world *here*. They have nothing to show that will stand by them in their trying moments, but we have that which will stand by us in the most trying moments, and be found most substantial when every thing else is found weakness: and just as faith looks off circumstances, and rests upon a living Saviour, in that degree it triumphs above itself, and is made strong in the midst of feebleness.

Faith looks to Christ for *a complete, perfect, and glorious righteousness*; standing before God, not with the ebb and flow of my prayers, not with my strength, but with the ebb and flow of nothing, because, blessed be God, all that believe “*are justified*” (not “*shall be*”) “*from all things.*”

Now this is pre-eminently a way of pleasantness, and a path of peace. At the first sight it is so, and in all the after stages of our eventful journey. Behold a man standing before God self-condemned; he has been chased out of the region of vain excuses; he has had his self-sufficiency taken from him; his self-power has had a fall; his self-wisdom has deserted him; he finds himself wretched, and poor, and miserable, and blind: he

was no defence to make, and he pretends to require none. But what does he now say? All who are saved and justified will say, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" And he says it, not because he must say it, but because the Holy Ghost teaches him to say it; and he confesses himself a sinner, not because he ought to confess it, but from an inward conviction of it. He is in this state hoping, and praying, and believing that by and bye he may enter into rest; but God takes him off himself, and draws him to Christ. O that it were my mercy, if so it pleased my heavenly Father, to see more of what I think forms the very glory of our Gospel—a direct view of Christ the Son of God; not looking at Christ through the medium of my graces, but through the medium of his own work.

Now suppose this case. Here is a man poor in his own eyes, but in the midst of all his poverty hoping that, by and bye, he shall present something: but the Holy Spirit lays him in the dust; and he feels himself utterly poor; and in that moment Christ is revealed to him as a gracious and complete Saviour. He does not begin to reason, Did he die for me? He does not go into the depth of the covenant, wondering whether his name is written in the Lamb's book of life. God the Spirit teaches him better, shows him Christ the Saviour of sinners, the Saviour of the vile, who came into the world to save sinners, the vilest and the very worst. As that truth is brought to his heart by the power of the Holy Ghost, then it is, that believing, he enters into rest; then he says, "He loved me, and gave himself for me." My brethren, thousands have thought so who were deceived in their thoughts. But when this poor soul, brought down to the dust, laid low, is brought by the power of the Eternal Spirit to look at once to Christ, to look off himself, to look off his convictions, his prayers, and his attainments, and to look at once to the great finished work of the Son of God, through that medium God the Spirit brings pleasantness and peace into his soul, and he walks by faith.

This is, indeed, a path of pleasantness and peace through a region of doubt and hesitation, of anxiety and endless disappointment—labouring in the fire, ploughing the rock, and counting the sand—leading from that desolate region towards a peace that passeth all understanding, in the contemplation of the finished work of Jesus. O, if some poor burdened sinners who hear me

to-day, who have been waiting and hoping, expecting and doubting, have been led to look off from themselves to Christ, and to stay their hearts on what he has done; they shall go out of the chapel in pleasantness, praising and thanking God. If you think this ought to make a man careless about evidences, I would rather preach a thousand sermons on evidences, than be negligent of them: look at them in their right place, and this proves itself to be of God, because it leads the soul to God.

But, my dear hearers, as this is the way of pleasantness and peace in the commencing stages of our journey, so it is *all through the journey*. I confess to you that I know nothing that can give the soul five minutes, or five seconds, of real peace, but as I look in the finished work of Jesus. Such is the holiness of God's law, such is the sanctity of God's precepts, such is the purity of the divine Being, such is the immaculate holiness of his character, that if I could look at him off the cross one moment, I should begin to sink. Therefore the first thing in the second stage must be that basis which was our all in the first stage. To rest my soul on what Christ has done and suffered, upon what he has finished and accomplished, upon his great atoning blood, upon his glorious righteousness, upon his infinite merit, upon his perfect intercession in the presence of Jehovah—this forms the ground-work of our happiness, the foundation of all our hope. And this I will dare to say, that no man can walk in pleasantness and peace, but as he looketh upon Christ, and loseth sight of the immaculate purity and perfection of the holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty.

Faith also looks to Christ for *sanctification*. This is a pleasant path and a happy way. I need hardly say, what I would wish to say if my coffin were before me, that without holiness no man can see God. I preach it living, and I would preach it dying; I would desire to lay it on your hearts—I would desire to have it laid on my own heart, that it may pervade all my sermons, go through all my engagements, and be made manifest, not only by my lips, but in my spirit, my temper, and my conduct, before God and before man. But while this remains an important truth never to be lost sight of, yet we would not forget how all the true blessedness and happiness of our lives is bound up in looking to Christ for sanctification. This is the head, the life-spring, the great source of all. The stream runs low enough—too low,

alas ! in you and me. Is there any thing of which we can say, "The good I would, I do?" Is there any thing of which we can say, "The evil I would not, that I do not?" Are we not constrained at the close of every day to take the place which the apostle himself took—"less than the least?" The more we know of ourselves, whatever others may think of us, are we not constrained to say, "Look not upon me, but look upon the face of thine Anointed?" Do I deny the indwelling of God the Holy Ghost in our hearts? I glory in it: I believe his indwelling is the true source and the maintenance of his work in our spirits, moment by moment. If there be that in us which tends to evil continually, blessed be his name, there is that which tends to holiness; for "that which is born of the flesh is flesh, but that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." But when I look at the little stream, and see how thick and dense, and how complicated the difficulties through which it has to pass, sometimes hardly marking with a tinge of green the banks along which it flows; how blessed is the thought that fulness is in Christ, all fulness of grace and strength—the residue of the Spirit, the great treasury; that we might receive out of his fulness, and in his strength be strong! This is a way of pleasantness and a path of peace.

Look at *our individual circumstances*. Do not imagine *me* excluded from some of your trials. I believe it is one of Satan's devices that you should think I am free from all worldly trials. Who told you so? Be assured of this, there is not one of God's saints whom he would bless but he will try him; and there is not a single grace which belongs to him which God will not try: and you will join with me when I say, it is a dense crowd through which we have to pass, and the more you and I are bent on going fairly through it, not making excuses, not throwing blame on corruption, not giving the opiate to our consciences; the more we are bent in the strength of God to go through the crowd, and turn neither to the right nor to the left—to mortify sin, to fight with the world, to oppose Satan—the more you and I shall find that this is the only path of pleasantness and peace; that we have all sanctification in Christ; that he has all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; and that he has them for us, to impart to us in the hour of our need, in the way of faith and prayer.

Faith looks upon Christ in the way of *glorification*. This is a happy way, a pleasant path. We shall not long be here. 1

know God's saints are sometimes much tried in the anticipation of death ; but I know there is not one of them has any cause for it. I think it is a testimony of Cecil's, that among the thousands he had seen in the course of his life who had gone to the banks of Jordan discouraged, he never saw one go through the waters whom the Lord did not uphold, and make strength of his weakness, and put a peaceable quietness into the heart of his believing one. Do you ask the secret of all this ? It was looking off from themselves to their risen, ascended, and glorified Lord. *There* is my Saviour and my Advocate ! He has taken possession of heaven on behalf of his people ; and here am I, the weakest, the meanest, the poorest, and the feeblest : but his strength is my strength, his merit is my merit ; and his ascension will bring up all his members safe to glory at the last.

I remember once reading, " Treasure up evidences, because in the day when you come to die they will stand you in good stead." I have visited many of God's saints when they have come to die ; I have seen some high in doctrine, some low in doctrine ; I have seen some rejoicing, and some who have been peaceful and quiet : but I never found one of God's saints who ever looked back and said, " What a devout saint of God I have been !" I have always found that, in the contemplation of eternity, every thing seemed to fade but the merit of the great Atoner, the satisfaction of the great Sacrifice, the intercession of the Son of God, the mediation of Jehovah Jesus. It seems as if everything did then fade from the mind, and nothing seemed to be sprinkled on the heart but the precious blood of Immanuel.

What shall I say of the man who has been hitherto turning his back on this way—walking not in the King's highway, but in his own way of pleasure, money, ambition, intellect ? I would prefer being one of those who have bowed the knee to Juggernaut, than stand in that man's stead who hears the gospel sound, and is hardened in trespasses and sins. You think I harp upon one subject : the Lord knoweth, before whom I stand, how he lays these things on my heart, by what I see, and hear, and read concerning those who profess the name of Christ. How awful is the state of those to whom I have alluded ! What way are they walking in ? Is there an aged one here—an old man or an old woman ? I speak not now regarding the distinctions

among men, but I look at them only as standing on the brink of eternity. Whither art thou going? Since thou last didst hear me, hours have passed on, days have passed on; but have they not brought thee nearer to thine own destruction? Who has been thy guide? Has it not been he who did seduce our first parents, through whose power it was that the world at the time of the flood was a destroyed world? Who is it that cajoles thee, week by week, that it shall be better by and bye, that a more convenient season will come? Will a more convenient season come than the present, when the next moment may waft thee into eternity?

Is there here a poor, burdened soul, a wearied spirit, a contrite sinner, stripped of his self-confidence, laid low in the dust? Has he been hitherto seeking rest, and finding none—toiling for peace, and experiencing none? What a way would that be to thee, if thou wert led to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ! This shall be the pleasant walk to thee—to step out of thyself, and put thy trust on the finished work of Immanuel, God with us. If a man in that street who was before a slave of the world, were to turn into this chapel, and lift up his hands in prayer, would not the change seem marvellous in thine eyes? And is it not a change almost equally marvellous if thy poor burdened spirit were by one glance, looking off from self to Christ, by the power of the Holy Ghost, to enter into the way of pleasantness and peace? Is there not enough in Jesus? His blood can make sins that are deep as scarlet, white as wool. Canst thou point to one case he has ever rejected—an instance of one too vile for the power of his blood to atone for? Not one such can be found, because his name is faithfulness and love. O that my words may be laid on thine heart! Then shalt thou find wisdom's ways to be ways of pleasantness, and paths of peace.

It requires wisdom to discern these ways. The ways of wisdom are often very deep and mysterious, very rough and painful; yet the issue of them is pleasantness, the end of them is peace. What a poor worm must thou be when we can say the tears of a broken heart have more happiness in them than all thy laughter and enjoyment! Add gold to gold, title to title, influence to influence; take a man from the lowest walks of life; give him all that this world can give, and we say, the tears of a broken heart have more substance in them, than all the flash, and the

fire, and the treasure of this world, with all its pomp and circumstance. And, as Rutherford says, "If the ploughed side of our field be so much brighter than thy bright side, what must our bright side be?" If we can turn to our tears, and say, "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy"—"sorrowful, yet always rejoicing"—"having nothing, yet possessing all things," what must thy state be when compared with that state which is all cloudless and bright, in the regions of perfect holiness and perfect happiness?

It requires wisdom to *discern* the paths of wisdom in the midst of this poor dying world, and it requires wisdom to *walk* in them. My dear brethren, my heart's desire for you is, that you may walk near to God; but the conviction of my spirit is, that in order to do it, thou must live on the Lord Jesus Christ. I go to him with my sins, and he gives me righteousness; I go to him continually, but I never weary him. It should be the business of life in all its emergencies to go to him for holiness, for support, for the continual upholding of his grace. Live in him for sympathy; be very jealous of looking to the Creator for sympathy. I think sometimes, I lose a blessing by going to the creature first, instead of going to my Lord first. What husband, do you think, likes his wife to go and open her heart to a stranger instead of to himself? Art thou wrong in using the means of grace? No. Art thou wrong in looking to him for sympathy? No: but thou art wrong in not going to him first.

Need I say how this involves the very substance of a holy life? What is it that weakens faith? What is it that strengthens unbelief? What is it that grieves the Spirit of God? "Your sins have separated between you and your God." This is the cause of separation: O avoid it, and walk near to God. As faith is the cause of all nearness, so close walking is the appointed means whereby God strengthens faith. Therefore avoid all laxity of walk, all coldness and want of watchfulness unto prayer. May you realize in your own souls the very substance of these words! In every trial, in every emergency, in every want, look to Him; and you shall be more than conquerors through Him who hath loved you.

THE ACCOUNTABLENESS INCURRED BY THE MINISTRY OF THE GOSPEL,

REV. S. ROBINS, A.M.

CHRIST CHAPEL, NORTH BANK, REGENT'S PARK, JULY 17, 1836.

“For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?”—2 CORINTHIANS, ii. 15—16.

If ministers of the gospel were appointed to labour only amongst willing hearts—if they never spoke a word for Christ but it found its way immediately to the understanding and to the affections, then would this world be blessed far above the condition of our fallen state. But it is not so: we have to deliver this message to many who will not receive it, to many who resist it, to many who set themselves in opposition to it; yet all the while the minister of the gospel knows that if that which is spoken to his people does not lead them near to God, the delivery of the requisition increases the distance of their separation from God; and hence it is that such a burden is continually laid on him, that he may quote the words of the apostle, and use them in application to his own responsibility and his own labour: “Who is sufficient for these things?”

There never was known so worthless a thing as a careless minister of Christ, the man who shall take upon his lips solemn words, who shall deal forth exhortation and warning, and speak of encouragement and of threatening unto others, while his own heart remains frozen in its indifference, and he speaks to his people of things which he had never felt, and towards which his life bears no corresponding testimony. It may be well pardoned if the minister of the gospel shall seem over-earnest and over-anxious; if he shall reiterate to his people the solemn things of judgment; if he shall bring before them again and again the matters which concern their souls as well as his. He remembers that he has to deal, not with one class; or with another class alone, for then were his task comparatively an easy one. He must speak to the believer, of all the rich and the

gracious consolations which the Word of God doth furnish forth for them ; or he might speak to the hardened and the ungodly, of the terrors of the last day, of the misery of an undone eternity ; and of the certainty of God's threatenings as well as the certainty of his promises. But the minister hath to deal with those who are mingled in their character—those who include in their numbers the advanced believer, such as are taking their first step in the Gospel, those who are just beginning to give heed to the words of life, those who are pausing on the threshold of the Gospel, and those who are altogether indifferent and careless, if not hardened and settled down in a carnal worldly spirit. It is, therefore, very reasonable and opportune that he should sometimes tell them of their danger ; that he should sometimes forewarn them that by every word he deals forth, and every message to which the heart has not yet borne witness, they are increasing their responsibility, and enlarging the amount of their spiritual danger.

Now so, beloved, would we deal with this present passage of God's Word: and we would speak of it, in the first place, as it respects the accountableness incurred by the ministry of the Gospel ; and, secondly, as it affects the spiritual condition of those amongst whom it is delivered.

As to the first head of our subject, we have to speak to you concerning THE RESPONSIBILITY WHICH ATTACHES TO THE HEARING OF THE GOSPEL. There are three separate and distinct conditions, and only three, which we can conceive men to occupy spiritually in respect to God ; either the condition of those who have no direct revelation ; the condition of those who have a direct but an incomplete revelation ; and the condition of those to whom it is direct and entire.

Now the first of these is the condition of the *heathen*. They enjoy no direct revelation from God ; they are left to other means ; not being irresponsible, not out of the province of accountableness, but occupying other ground, and having a different standard before God. The Lord gave them *conscience* ; he established conscience as his own vicegerent in every human heart ; so that among all the diversity of circumstances in the midst of which men have lived, in all the variety of their condition, still there hath been this arbiter to pronounce upon all moral questions, to guide them into the truth, and to lead them unto righteousness, except just so far as its authority was contravened and hindered by the power of the carnal

nature. Now conscience we do believe to have ever been that widespread principle which hath attained dominion over every thinking, living, and immortal creature, so that no man hath been born out of the region of conscience.

But this is not all whereby God hath made the heathen responsible. He hath spread before them the fair works of his *creation*. Now we might speculate very unsatisfactorily and very inconclusively concerning the amount of information which the heathen should obtain out of the volume of nature, unless God himself had given us information thereupon. But the Bible tells us expressly concerning this matter, that “that which is known of God is manifest in them”—that is, the heathen—“for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.”

But supposing that this information thus to be gathered by the exercise of man’s reason on the works of nature, were altogether insufficient to give information of God’s nature and attributes, he has opened unto them another book, the book of *providence*, and there, by a continual and most kind manifestation of himself, he hath been directing them into a spiritual knowledge of Him who made them and sustains them. And here, again, would we fall back on Bible testimony: God “hath not left himself without witness in that he did us good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.” These are words addressed (mark you) to the heathen: but this was insufficient for them.

Therefore God dealt still further with the heathen: he sometimes came out of his dark chamber, and did manifest himself so to the world that one would suppose it could hardly have missed to recognize his interposition. He poured forth his judgments on them; he rained down fire from heaven, so that the cities of the plain were consumed thereby; he opened the windows of heaven, and he broke up the foundations of the great deep, so that the world, because of its apostacy and its atrocious wickedness, was overflowed by the deluge: and herein was God giving to all after-times testimony of his interposition as the Governor, as well as the Maker, of the universe.

Now when all these trials had been made during a long series of ages, and had altogether failed, and man knew nothing of his

Maker, and recognized none of the foot-prints of Deity, and paid no service, and offered no worship, to the Holy One ; then God commenced the making of a *direct revelation* of himself, and he began to deal with one separate nation upon new and formerly untried principles. He came as at Sinai, and there, visibly and with all glory and solemn accompaniment, did he deliver the book of his law, and there did he prescribe rites and observances, pregnant with meaning, and all giving information concerning the great plan which God had devised for the restoration and the eternal glory of man's fallen race. Henceforth the Jews did not take their place with the surrounding nations, and had not a common lot with the people about them ; but they became distinguished and parted off, and surrounded by a hedge of privileges. There God committed to them his own truth, and they became the depositaries of revelation ; and all the services which were bound upon them, and all the burdens and ceremonials through which they had to pass, were just so many visible and legible books wherein they might read what God had ordained for their posterity. But all the while they did not understand these things ; they were far away from all spiritual worship, they were far away from all spiritual intelligence of the law ; and they made to themselves a mere idolatry of external things : they were as superstitious as their neighbours, but in a different way.

Then did God commence a new way with mankind, not only by a *direct* revelation, such as the Jews enjoyed, but one that was *complete*, not consisting in type, imagery, and prediction, but having all the fulness and the substance of the entire accomplishment. In the Gospel of Jesus Christ, God hath given us full information upon these two points : he has told us concerning sin, what is its true nature, that it consisteth in the transgression of the divine law, that it has nothing to do as to its character with more or less, that it is a thing hideous in itself, and hateful unto God. He hath surrounded it with the utmost solemnities, so that we no longer dare trifle with sin, no longer deal with sin as though it were a small matter ; for God hath taught us, in the Gospel of his grace, how it caused the Eternal One to come down from his glory, to become as one of us, to be subject to all distresses and all disgraces, to anguish, agony, and death, just because sin was so tremendously evil that in no other way could it be atoned for and trampled under foot. Then, God having given us information concerning the way of pardon and peace, and having exhibited

himself in a new character, he has shown himself, not, as under the Old Testament dispensation, the Lord of Hosts, mighty and powerful, putting down all hinderances and opposition ; but he has exhibited himself as a kind and gracious Father, yearning over his poor wandering children, who has spared no expense, but who is infinitely liberal in the dispensation of the treasures of his grace, that he might reconcile them to himself, and keep them evermore in the circle of his own unchanging favour.

Now herein God hath been completing that which was imperfect unto the former dispensation ; for in the Gospel of Jesus Christ we find the substance, whereas the Jews possessed only the shadow. They had books of revelation, written by the mind of the Spirit, and, as it were, with the very finger of God : but *we* have the canon of inspiration complete ; we have our Bible, wanting no part, having the New Testament as well as the Old ; having the life of Jesus, all the circumstances concerning the office, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus, before us ; having the full promulgation of the truth by the servants whom he sent forth to teach by word of mouth, and to leave their letters unto the church, to be as a perpetual and a most precious inheritance to all God's believing people.

But, beloved, mark you, all the while, how there hath been an *increase of responsibility*. All this while God hath been applying clear information of himself ; hath been coming down, as it were, to the level of our darkened understanding ; hath furnished us with all truth, and with all evidence. He hath given us the external and the internal evidence : he hath shown us, in the history of the world, a confirmation of his own word ; and he shows, in the inner chamber of our own heart, the suitableness of the remedy, and a full and a complete knowledge of the disease.

Now, we cannot stand at the judgment as the heathen would, nor even upon the low level which was occupied by the Jew : but we must go to judgment with all our accountableness upon us ; we must go to judgment as those unto whom God hath committed the perilous blessing of a preached Gospel ; perilous to the unheeding, the careless, and the unconverted, for it will just go to the mighty enhancement of their everlasting condemnation. They cannot plead that they were ignorant ; they cannot plead that they received imperfect communications ; for God hath given to them all that they needed to know, and hath richly and abundantly bestowed on them all the means of grace. With the gathering of these external privileges to themselves, they have risen to a new standard of judg-

ment; for, with the imparted gift, there hath come an increased accountableness; and they must be judged according to the character of that which God hath imparted to them. At the great assize, when Jesus, unto whom all judgment hath been committed, shall occupy the prepared seat, and before whom the books shall be opened, then shall stand forth these witnesses: *Providence*—all providential gifts and bestowments; the kind, gracious, and liberal things which God hath been doing to all the race of man: so that there shall not rise up one from the face of this broad earth but hath been a recipient of bounty, hath been sustained with food; and whose breath-drawing has been under the care and kindness of the Lord.

But not general providence only, in which all have participated, but the biography of every man shall furnish forth instances of *special* interposition; the hand extended to supply and to relieve; the arm outstretched to defend and to deliver; mercy coming most opportunely, at a most unlooked-for time, and under circumstances the most unexpected: these, forgotten by us, shall be remembered by the Lord, and they shall occupy page after page in that book that shall be opened to the confusion of the unbelieving and unrepenting.

But this is not all. It would be well for those who shall stand in judgment if this were all they have to account for—lost privileges and neglected mercies. God will call forth, not only his own interventions of providence, but his interventions of *grace*: the sermons they have heard, the Sabbath days they have spent, the messages God hath sent to them, and all the words of kindness which have come down from their Father; these will be the witnesses against them. And if, all the while, the heart hath been unchanged; if it hath remained in its obduracy; if there hath been no turning to God; no yearning after the things of heaven, then, that which should have been “the savour of life unto life,” shall, in the fearful language of our text, be unto such an one “the savour of death unto death.”

But let us go on, as we proposed, in the second place, and speak of this matter AS IT RESPECTS THE SPIRITUAL CONDITION OF EVERY ONE UNTO WHOM THE GOSPEL IS PREACHED. We are sure that none of God's people shall be lost: that which in his eternal councils he hath devised must go forward, unhindered and unchecked by all human opposition, to its final accomplishment.

The apostle testifies concerning himself and those who were his colleagues in the work of preaching the word, "We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life." The purpose of God shall be accomplished; the preached Gospel shall effect its design. Now, concerning the purpose of mercy, concerning the word being "life unto life," we do not now speak. We know very well that those whom God is bringing unto himself, those who are to be the heirs of eternal glory, shall, by these means, be brought to glory; that saved souls shall attribute all their blessedness unto the word that was ministered to them through the Lord Jesus Christ. But it is with respect to the more awful words of the message, which come in the way of *warning*, that we desire to fix your attention. If it be not received it is "*the savour of death unto death.*" It is something separate and distinct from the responsibility of which we have spoken.

In the first place, it is something altogether separate and distinct from that enlarged amount of accountableness which belongs to those who live, not only as heathen having conscience, or as Jews having an imperfect revelation, but as Christians, having the entire communication of God's purposes. It is something separate from this, namely, *the worse condition in which the preached Gospel leaves those who have heard it.*

Now this belongs, in some sort, to all the inhabitants of the land in which Christ has been preached. It belongs in some sort to those who have their dwelling-place in christianized countries. They can hardly miss to hear something of the Gospel, if they have ever, in all their life long, wandered into a church; though the minister shall not preach Christ, though his sermon shall have been a cold piece of barren morality, yet they cannot have remained during the service without hearing something of salvation. Therefore, they do not go forth from that hearing the Gospel, imperfect and circumscribed though its amount be—they do not go away just what they were.

But this is a very rare case. It is seldom indeed that a man shall hear the Gospel but once in his life-time: he has grown up in a certain familiarity with an established form of faith; it is not with him as it is with the heathen, who has been taught by his father to bow down to the idols of wood and stone, and has bounded all his privileges within the little compass of his country's super-

stitutions. In this respect we are inclined to believe that the condition of the missionary who goes forth and speaks for the first time to the heathen, to preach concerning things altogether strange to him, has necessarily, therefore, a different position to occupy from the minister who is to preach Christ among people to whom his message is familiar. In the former case there will be opposition enough in the savage nations with which the man has to encounter; there will be hinderances enough from the strange modes and fashions of their lives; but when he speaks to them, the very novelty of his message will cause it to be fastened on their minds. They may argue against him; they may set themselves to put away his words from them; but at the same time the very newness of the subject will, in some sort, tend to fix it on their attention. The progress he makes among them may be slow, gradual, and almost imperceptible; but we scarcely believe that the missionary can go forth in simplicity of heart, carrying the Gospel in his hand, labouring for souls, ready to spend and be spent, and yet that he should pass many years and find no good result.

But, many a minister hath known, to his heart's bitter sorrow, how he may toil, and how there may be gathered round him a circle of listening people, indifferent and careless; and how he shall proclaim the Gospel day after day, and year after year, and they seem frozen up in a deep and utter apathy of their souls. And wherefore this? Because we believe, in this latter case, that this is a special hinderance; that it is an old subject; there is no novelty. The people have assumed that they participate in the joint stock in the common religion of the land. They have been baptized in their infancy, and therefore they assume christianity to themselves: they have participated in the external means of grace; sabbaths have been observed by those around them; Bibles have been read, perhaps, in their hearing; therefore they come to the wrong conclusion that they are not and cannot be unconverted. But, perhaps, to the ordinary means of grace, furnished forth through all the towns and villages of an evangelized kingdom, they may have possessed peculiar, and separate, and enlarged privileges. It may be that the minister whom God hath set over them, hath dealt very faithfully, tenderly, and affectionately with their souls: it may be that he hath proclaimed all the message, and in a form the most winning and the most subduing. It may be that they lacked none of those opportunities and means of grace which one would antecedently suppose must so tend to convert them. Yet what hath

been the result? Truly, where the Gospel hath been rejected, there are proofs enough of the evil results of such a condition—the ministry of the word in all faithfulness amongst unchanged hearts. It hath often happened that a minister hath to occupy a parish sphere, perhaps, the most hopeless and destitute which man could take up; a place where the Gospel hath been faithfully preached, and hath been rejected by the people; so that he labours on heartlessly and hopelessly, because he sees that there is no results of the labours of his predecessor who had toiled among the people, and prayed over them, and wept for them, and gone down to his grave broken-hearted because he saw no change; and how shall a new servant of the sanctuary find his way unto their souls? How shall he make them anxious about Christ? The terrors of the law have been proclaimed among them already, but their hearts have not been broken-up by the ploughshare of conviction. The seed hath been scattered abroad among them, but hath found its way to no fertile furrows. It hath been watered by prayers; the minister hath again and again asked the divine blessing; but there went up no corresponding prayers from the untouched and unchanged hearts of those to whom he ministers; and he seeth no results. It is as though he had exhausted all the arrows of its weapons, as though there were no arguments he could fetch in from the Bible but hath been familiar to them, and no resources drawn from the tenderness of God's compassion. They have heard it again and again; and by these very repetitions of the plan which God hath formed for man's salvation, their condition hath by each reiteration, and by all these repetitions, their condition hath become worse.

But let us suppose that to all this there has been added something over and above the circumstances of common life—early discipline and education, which appeared at the first sight to tend directly to the changing and the saving of the soul; let us suppose that even from infancy the mother's heart hath been anxious for her child, that she hath spent her faithful and thoughtful hours in leading him to Jesus; and as he grew up he was familiar with the observances of a pious household, and the morning and evening prayer were never strange to him, the word of God being expounded by the paternal voice, and listened to with attention by the circle of the family; and the boy grown up, yet unconverted—baptized with water, but unbaptized by the Spirit—hath submitted

to these things, which he could not well avoid during his time of discipline, but eager and glad for his emancipation into the world on which his thoughts and his hopes have been fixed: and we will suppose he has fallen into many a snare, and he has come home spirit-wounded, and bitter remorse laid upon him; and it findeth him out upon his bed of sickness and suffering, where he is reaping the fruit of his sin; and the minister comes to his bed-side: we do believe that the dealing with such a one would be far less hopeful than the dealing with one who had never heard the Gospel. For one should tell him of sin, and how it hath wrought these bitter works, and these miserable results; but all this he heard in his father's house: we tell him of mercy, and the word, one would think, would fall, almost like the sweetness and melody of a familiar voice upon his soul; but it is a thing with which he has been familiar, and it awakens no new thoughts, and enkindles no new feelings within him: they are things he has heard again and again, and therefore, by the very hearing of the Gospel, and by the very re-echoing of its message, by the very bringing the tidings of mercy unto him, while he hath resolutely stood out in the rejection of them, he has made his own condition just in so far more hopeless. And yet God's word is working its result; it shall not return unto him void, but it shall accomplish that which he pleases, and shall prosper in the thing whereto he sent it. It must be either of life or of death; the preached Gospel must be unto him the "savour" of the one or of the other.

Now what is contained in that single word, *life*? Who can comprehend it? We are yet acquainted only with the outskirts of the existence. We know of life only a broken and an isolated fragment. We might take all that is most attractive on earth, all that does most engage the young heart, all the success, and all the glory which were ever enjoyed by the human heart; and we say of all this glory, and all this success, *Ichabod!* "Departed glory" is written over all. Nay, we must affirm, concerning the most advanced believer, concerning the man who has made the greatest progress in divine things, who has had the clearest and most intimate communion with Jesus ever enjoyed on earth—he yet knows not the meaning of the word; he yet understands not what life is. The prisoner in the deep dungeon might listen with delight to words that told him of liberty, and hope, and free companionship, and

communion with familiar nature, and the bright morning sun, and the quiet evening shade ; and his imagination should be wrought, and his heart would be gladdened, and he would seem almost to present unto himself a perfect portraiture of that whereon his hopes were fixed. But when the day cometh that his prison-door is unlocked, and his fetters are removed, and he goes forth to breathe the free breath of heaven on the mountain-top, and to look abroad on the scenes whereon the hopes of his earliest years were fixed—O, then he sees that imagination never rose to the truth, and that the pleasant dreams of his heart, in the days of his captivity, never half told him of the delight and the blessedness which he now experiences.

Even so is it with the believer now. He is in the prison-house, from which he is not and shall not be set free till death, and his soul evermore fretteth herself against the bars of her cage. But God doth not let such an one be spirit-broken, does not let his heart be crushed ; but tells of future times ; tells him of a brighter and better state, where sin shall be known no more, and where sorrow shall never set its foot : and, by and bye, when God takes him out of his imprisonment, and brings him into the land of liberty and light, all the anticipation wherewith he hath sustained his mourning spirit was as nothing ; for “ Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.” We tell you this for your comfort : we tell you this because we do believe that to some of you the preached Gospel is the “ savour of life unto life.”

But we have to speak of *death* : and concerning this we have as little power of giving information as concerning life. It is not the mere breaking-up of the tie that bindeth the material and the spiritual nature ; this we do conceive : but it is the *second* death ; the extinction of hope, but not the annihilation of being. It is the destituteness of the heart ; the desolation in which the condemned shall live for ever, when they have launched upon the ocean of dark waters, to which there is no shore. Now, when we look on the departed, the mantle of mortality spread over them, the composed limbs, and the quenched light of the eyes, we do say “ Weep not for the dead.” If they “ died in the Lord,” there is hope, there is peace, and there is joy ; there is the angels’ song, and the martyr’s crown ; there is the companionship of the blessed for those

But we speak of that concerning which there is no comfort, and for which no redemption has been provided, which is to last onward and onward : and we beseech you by these things, if there be death, if there be the sentence of righteous condemnation against the sinner. God hath provided a Saviour : “ seek him while he may be found ; call upon him while he is near.”

SERVING THE LORD CHRIST.

REV. H. MELVILL, B.D.

CAMDEN CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, JULY 24, 1836.

"And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance; for ye serve the Lord Christ."
—COLOSSIANS, iii. 23, 24.

WE have had frequent occasion to remark to you, how little Christianity interfered with the institutions of society, and how carefully its Founder abstained from all attempts at prescribing or altering the form of civil government. It was not because there was not much which required to be changed; for the social system was then but ill-arranged, the relation of man to man was little understood, and the mutual dependence of ruler and subject imperfectly recognized. But the religion which Christ came to teach, was a religion equally adapted to all forms of government and all conditions of society; and which, therefore, though it introduced principles which, thoroughly followed out, would act upon the politics as well as the morals of a land, made it no part of its business to excite prejudice by any appearance of an endeavour to re-model the state. The religion took nothing for granted, except the sinfulness and helplessness of man; that sinfulness and helplessness which are precisely the same beneath a republic or a monarchy; the same, whether the man be a king or a slave. Hence it was not essential to the progress of Christianity, nor required for the performance of its duties, that there should be any political revolution, or any alteration in the form of society. A state could not, indeed, as we have already hinted, receive Christianity, and not find that it had taken to itself a great, though silent, corrector of abuses, and regenerator of institutions; but nevertheless, Christianity needed and demanded no change, as either preliminary to its admission or necessary for its advancement. The bondsman, for example, might as well be a Christian as the freeman; and therefore, Christianity made no direct attack upon the system of slavery: it opened to all men the glorious liberty of the Gospel, and left it to be inferred, as it has gradually been, that where all are freemen none should be slaves.

And it is yet further observable, that the religion of the New Testament not only abstains from direct interference with much that is opposed to its spirit, but even sets itself to the support of existing institutions, by requiring of its disciples that they be content, whatever their condition. The slave is not taught to labour for the acquisition of freedom. If he have his *choice*, then, indeed, St. Paul bids him prefer *liberty*; but the general rule was, that every man should abide in the same calling wherein he was called, and make it his great effort to adorn the doctrine of his Saviour in all things. And to reconcile men to the inequalities in human condition—inequalities which, so far as they are inconsistent with the genius, must be gradually removed by the march of Christianity—the inspired writers insist on the truth, that there is no respect of persons with God, but that all were on the same level, and all possessed the same privileges, when considered as candidates for a home beyond the grave.

In this respect, but in no other, Christianity might be said to interfere with the distinctions of human society, making them of no moment, and even inverting, as it were, the position of the several ranks. Thus, in St. Paul's address to a slave, to which we have already referred, you find he speaks as though, through this operation, the master and slave had actually changed places: "For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman; likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant." The freeman, you observe, is declared to become a *servant*, and the servant a *freeman*. And why, then, should those differences in station, which exist only for this temporary scene, and have nothing corresponding when men are verging on immortality, why should they minister to pride in the exalted, or cause uneasiness in those in lower ranks? St. James takes much the same course, in reference to the rich and the poor: "Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted, but the rich in that he is made low, because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away." Christianity, he seems to say, has conferred such dignity on the mean man, that he may regard himself elevated, and has so taught the mighty his own nothingness, that he ought to feel himself depressed. Thus, in a certain sense, wealth and poverty, like freedom and slavery, changed places when men embraced the religion of Jesus: that religion made such compensation to the poor, and so showed the rich their worthlessness, except as used to God's glory, that it might be said to have brought the two to equality, or even to have transferred the one into the position of the other.

Now this is a very beautiful, and should be a very effectual,

mode of reconciling men to the inequalities of human condition, and repressing all those murmurings which oppression and hardship are likely to excite. If, indeed, there had been differences in spiritual advantages, corresponding with the differences in external circumstances; if servitude or poverty extended to another world, so that distinctions were perpetuated, and men's position for eternity were determined by their position upon earth; why then there might be just grounds of complaint, and we could not treat as unimportant the distinctions in society. But if all are on the same level, as probationers for another world, each station having its appropriate duties, and the recompenses of eternity being equally attainable by the occupants of each, certainly there ought not to be repining among those who fill the lower offices in life: they have the same prizes within reach, as though they filled the higher; and if they walk a rougher road, they may possibly reach a loftier eminence hereafter.

This is, in fact, the sum of St. Paul's statement in our text; or rather, it is by this kind of reasoning that St. Paul urges on servants the being diligent in their calling. It is to servants, or rather to slaves (for such were the servants of antiquity), that he speaks in the words on which we discourse. In the verses preceding our text, he had said, "Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God." He then carries on the admonition: "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily" (or, from the soul), "as to the Lord, and not unto men." This was placing duty on high ground; they were to lose sight of men, and have respect only unto God; and lest the lowly and mean nature of the offices they had to perform should be thought to incapacitate them for having so lofty a regard, the apostle adds, "knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance; for ye serve the Lord Christ." You observe, at once, that the motive to diligence and faithfulness in their calling is here derived from their being the servants of Christ, and from their having consequently the same rewards proposed to them as though they had moved in a higher sphere of life. And there is much in this statement and reasoning of the apostle, which deserves our most serious examination. It is not necessary that we confine our thoughts to the precise instance of servants or slaves; we may rather extend them to all classes of the community; for if it can be said of the lowest, that in performing the duties of their station, they "serve the Lord Christ," we may fairly regard that the duty was rightly discharged, as discharged in the service of the Saviour. It is not merely that every

employment is to be considered as an employment under God (for this might be true, and yet the men differently employed have different advantages); it is yet further that the reward of the inheritance is equally set before the various servants, however dissimilar the offices they respectively fill.

We say again, that there is much in these assertions demanding and deserving our most careful consideration; and this we now proceed to give them, arranging our remarks under the divisions which have already been indicated; considering, that is, in the first place, the fact that servants "serve the Lord Christ;" and, in the second place, the inference, that "of the Lord they shall receive the reward of the inheritance."

Now the first assertion is not wholly without its parallel in the case of a human household or kingdom. There may be many gradations of rank in the establishment of a great and mighty prince—gradations descending from the noble to the ignoble: but it may with equal truth be said of each rank in succession, that it is in the service of the sovereign; the dignity of the high not raising him above being a servant, and the meanness of the one of low parentage not disqualifying him from the bearing such office. It is altogether possible that those who serve in the inferior places are never brought into contact or association with the prince, that he is unacquainted with their persons or names, and that thus they may be the servants of his servants, so obscure is their station in his household. But all this evidently interferes not with what we have affirmed; the men are in the prince's service; the duties they discharge are duties in whose performance he has direct interest, and the neglect of which would as rapidly tell on his comfort and well-being as that which devolves on the highest of his functionaries. The labourer who tills the ground, is as actually serving the king as the nobleman who is assisting at his councils; and if this lowest of his servants were to neglect his occupation, and refuse to be the cultivator of the soil, all the higher servants would soon be forced to the vacating their posts, and confusion of the worst kind would pervade the whole kingdom.

Now if the church be regarded, according to the scriptural imagery, as a kingdom or household, of which Christ is the head, we may argue, in like manner, that all the members of which it is composed are the servants of Christ; so that, however diverse their occupations, they all belong to the same master. It is but enlarging the household, and supposing it to comprehend the Christian community, and then we have the Saviour occupying the place of the

universal ruler, and every individual, whether exalted or despised amongst men, employed by the ruler in some appointed capacity. And we may say, yet further, that such is the connexion between the duties of the several servants, so thoroughly do they conspire to the making up one harmonious obedience, that you could no more spare the Christian usefulness of the humblest individual, than the minute labour of the tiller of the soil, and would as much unhinge the church by diffusing infidelity, as a kingdom by diffusing rebellion through the lower classes.

The parallel, however, altogether fails, when we come to observe the knowledge which the master has of his servants. We may contend, and we may prove, that the lowest in the royal establishment is as truly the servant of the king as the highest; but only the higher servants are at all known to the king; the others are strangers, of whose labour he makes use, but with whom he holds no intercourse. But the beautiful thing which we can affirm in reference to the church is, that the eye of the master is as much on one servant as on another, and his acquaintance with one as actual as with another; so that when we declare of a man, that he "serves the Lord Christ," we mean a great deal more than when we make the assertion of the various retainers in an overgrown household. We do not merely mean, that the duties which the man discharges, are duties by whose performance the cause of Christ is advanced or upheld; we mean that the man is as actually employed by Christ, and as actually working for Christ, as though he had received directions from his lips.

We cannot infer less than this, from the statement in our text. The parties there spoken of have masters upon earth, who both possessed and enforced the right to their service; but nevertheless, however they might have appeared to serve only men, it was the service of Christ in which they were all along engaged. The apostle thus takes away, as it were, all intermediate grades, and brings the servant into direct communication with the master; in place of supposing that his ministration only reaches him through a long and intricate channel, in fact substitutes Christ for man, and represents every duty as a duty to the Saviour, rather than to our fellow-men.

And here is the great principle on which we wish to fasten and which we wish to illustrate. We are quite accustomed, it may be, to the regarding certain men as employed in the service of Christ, and certain occupations as of wholly a spiritual character. But the question is—for it is to this length that we are carried by our text—whether we are wont to regard all Christians as his servants,

and every occupation as assigned by him in his capacity as universal master. We readily allow the title in question to the self-denying missionary, who has gone forth to the deserts of heathenism, carrying with him the precious seed which can alone cover them with moral verdure. As we hear of the intrepid man, wrestling with the barbarism and idolatry of centuries, and sparing no toil and foregoing no sacrifice, that he may turn benighted tribes from the error of their way, every tongue gives him the name of a servant of Christ, or declares that he is labouring for a master in heaven. The same is often done in reference to ministers, who, with apparently less to surrender than the missionary, but with frequently full as much to *endure*, are struggling against the ignorance of a home population, and devoting all their energies to introducing practical Christianity in a dark and profligate parish. There is something about the ministerial occupation, which so manifestly associates it with the work which Christ himself was exalted to finish ; it is so evidently designed and constructed for the furthering the cause of Christ, that none will hesitate when they see it faithfully discharged, to regard and describe it as emphatically the service of the Redeemer.

But if we take any of the ordinary businesses of life, of the merchant, of the tradesman, or of the lawyer, do we view in each of these an employment in the service of Christ, so that we are prepared to say to each man, so engaged, “ Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord, and not unto men, knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance, for ye serve the Lord Christ ? ” Are ye not rather disposed to think that the secular nature of the business quite detaches it from connexion with the heavenly ; so that while we cheerfully allow that the men whose business it is may be true servants of Christ, we suppose that the service which they render their Redeemer is a service unconnected with their ordinary employment, performed almost in spite of that employment, in place of being identical or even associated with it ? When we speak of an active merchant as also a faithful and zealous servant of Christ, are we not practically regarding him under two different considerations ? Do we not separate the man in his religious capacity, from the man in his mercantile capacity ? And though we may be persuaded, that religion exerts a certain influence over the transactions of life, yet, when we speak of an individual as engaged in the service of Christ, are we not referring to what he does when he is away from his merchandize, rather than to what he does in his character of a trader ? We call him a servant of Christ, because we know him

diligent and ready to do all in his power to further the cause of the Gospel, and anxious to minister, with an unwearied generosity, to the relief of his suffering fellow-men. But, do we also call him a servant of Christ, in reference to the occupation in which his days and his nights are consumed? In other words, are we prepared to say to him, when we behold him immersed in all the engagements of his commerce, "Remember, you serve the Lord Christ?"

It cannot be denied, that our text requires of us thus to regard all the businesses in which Christians can be lawfully engaged, as included under the definition, "the service of Christ." The parties whom the apostle addressed filled the very meanest offices in the state. If any employment might seem devoid of all religious character, their's was that employment: if it could be affirmed of any occupation, that it was too secular, too earthly, too grovelling, to be considered as discharged in the service of heaven, their's was that occupation. Yet, even to *slaves* St. Paul could say, "Ye serve the Lord Christ." And this he says, not as meaning that they might serve the Lord Christ, notwithstanding they were slaves, but, as slaves of man, they were the servants of Christ. He does not console them under their bondage, by telling them that, in spite of all the disadvantages of their condition, they might find opportunities of doing something for Christ, as a master: on the contrary, he exhorts them to diligence in their calling, on the very principle that, in serving their earthly master, they were actually serving their heavenly. Whatsoever they did, they were to "do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;" a most plain intimation, that the Lord was served by and through the very act of that service which they render to man.

And this is putting an ennobling and encouraging character on the various businesses of life. We are well aware that many pious individuals feel as though their worldly occupations were necessarily lets and hinderances to the growth of vital godliness; so that if they could be let loose from secular engagements, they should make far more rapid progress as servants of Christ. They are disposed to regard the time which they are compelled to spend in the haunts of trade, as so much time lost to the concerns of eternity; and only those few hours which they can occasionally steal from pressing labours, to devote to public and private worship, the studying of the Bible, or the visiting the sick, seem to them employed for a Master in heaven. This must be here altogether a mistake, or St. Paul is incorrect in his address to the Colossian slaves. It is as much the appointment and fixed ordinance of God that you should labour for the subsistence of yourselves and your

households, as that you should assemble in the sanctuary, hear the preached word, and receive the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. You are quite as much submitting yourselves to the known will of your Maker, whilst carrying forward your week-day employments, as when abstracting yourselves from the din and bustle of the world, that you may enjoy the hallowed rest of the Sabbath. We know too well there may be practically too little, or nothing, of thus serving God in the occupations of the week ; but then we equally know that there may be little or nothing of the serving God in the occupations of the Sabbath : and just as a worldly-minded man may go through the Sabbath, and yet not engage in the service of God, so may a spiritually-minded man pursue in the avocations of the week, and never for a moment be withdrawn from its service. The only thing required is, that he strive to do whatever he does "as to the Lord, and not unto men." If he will consider himself as in all places equally the servant of Christ ; if he will allow such considerations to exert their natural influence in repressing inordinate desires, withholding him from any conduct which might dishonour his profession ; we should have as little hesitation in saying to this man, in his shop or counting-house, "Thou art a servant of Christ," as when we found him in the church, or at the bed-side of the sick. And we do heartily rejoice that the Bible contains such portions as this on which we now meditate. We feel that the majority of those whom it is our duty to address, have to give themselves throughout the week to secular occupations ; they must rise up early, and late take rest ; and that, except when the Sabbath comes round, and sheds its blessed silence along the avenues of traffic, they have but few moments wherein to perform religious duties. And we feel how probable it is that these ingrossing occupations will tell injuriously on your spiritual interests, that your very souls will become wholly secularized ; and therefore are we often earnest in warning you against covetousness and the deceitfulness of riches, and in beseeching you to remember, that over and above providing for our wants in the present world, you have to secure your well-being through the ages of eternity. But with all our consciousness that worldly business may become a great snare, we have no desire, even if we had the power, of withdrawing you from that business. We know of no worth which it would necessarily be to your practical Christianity, that you should cease to be obliged to labour for your livelihood ; on the contrary, we should consider the peril to be mightily aggravated, if, in place of the necessity of toil, you had the option of being idle. And then comes in, as a refreshing and animating truth, that it is altogether

your own faults if your secular occupations have nothing of a spiritual character, and that the industry that is turned on the gaining subsistence is not accompanied by industry in the working out your own salvation. You may be—and, if not false to yourselves and your God, you actually are—engaged in a work of obedience to the divine appointment, submission to the divine pleasure, and faith in the divine promises, whilst engaged in drawing up deeds as lawyers, making shipments as merchants, or dealing out goods as tradesmen. “Ye serve the Lord Christ.” Aye, it may be a wonderful thing, that He who is exalted far above all principality and power, on whom the heavenly hosts wait as ministers to do his will, should be served by and through the various transactions of trade, and handicraft, and agriculture; there may be a suspicion afloat, that it is derogatory to his greatness to regard the various businesses with which the minds of men are engaged as so many departments of occupation appointed and presided over by himself. But the just light in which to view the matter is, not that of the Master degraded by the meanness of the servant, but of the servant ennobled by the majesty of the master. It is no degradation to a divine Being, unto whom the only great thing in the universe is necessarily himself, that he can be served through our trades and professions. But it puts a vast dignity on those trades and professions, that a divine Being condescends to account them his service. And there needs nothing but that the occupation be lawful in itself, and pursued with that sobriety of mind which proves that men are not burying the future in the present; and, forasmuch as those engaged therein are submitting themselves to an ordinance of God, they are fairly to be reckoned as performing their duty “heartily, as to the Lord.”

We would have you, therefore, put away from you the thought that your worldly employments are necessarily withdrawing you from the service of Christ. It may be a convenient notion to entertain, because, since you feel the engagements unavoidable, you may fancy a slow growth in religion excusable. But God does not allow one of his appointments thus to thwart another. Having made it incumbent upon you to toil for subsistence, and having also made it incumbent upon you to toil for salvation, we can be quite sure there is no contrariety between the two, but that, in rightly doing the former you may be doing also the latter. We have only, therefore, to ask, as we have already intimated, whether it is your effort, “whatsoever ye do,” to “do it unto the Lord, and not as to men?” and if you can answer in the affirmative, we can pronounce you serving Christ whilst busied in your week-day employments.

And you may easily judge what is meant by acting as to the Lord, and not to men. He cannot be acting as to the Lord, who is not acting most conscientiously, most honourably, and with desires duly regulated by thoughts of the account which he must render up at death. The common mode of acting, is to act as to men, as though men alone were to be feared and consulted: hence all the trick and evasion, and grasping, of which, indeed, it were monstrous to say, that those who practise them can be serving the Lord Christ. But the Christian merchant, the Christian lawyer, the Christian tradesman—the men, that is, who carry the principles of Christianity into their respective professions—they are as truly working in the service of Christ, while working in their callings, as the Christian minister when addressing his congregation, rousing the unconverted, and confirming the wavering. And this should be an encouraging truth to those of you who feel the pressure of worldly occupations.

It should be further an elevating truth, to those who fill the lower stations of life. Why should any station be despicable, when it is one in which Christ may be served as in the highest and most illustrious? Let us take the very case suggested by our text. I can quite believe of servants, that they may be galled by the apparent inferiority of their condition; their menial employments may seem to them degrading, and they may indulge a wish that they were placed in another sphere where their business would be such as would be honourable to perform. But these servants are vastly underrating their position. If the apostle speaks correctly in our text, there is nothing which it is their duty to do, which they may not so perform as thereby to render a service to Christ. And what more can they desire? Can they be degraded by that by which the Lord Christ is served? Is an employment too menial, when the master, for whom it is undertaken, is the Mediator by whom they were redeemed? O it should cheer the heart, and raise the spirit of the poorest, the meanest amongst you, to think that, however base his office in society, he is actually in the service of the King of kings and Lord of lords. It is Christ who has given him his place to fill, and his work to do. And we could come with confidence into the midst of those on whom the world may be looking down haughtily, between whom and the great ones of the earth there is the widest separation that there can be between man and man, and who seem to live only to wear away life in drudgery for others; and we could feel that we were surrounded by the domestics of Him, all the members of whose household are kings and priests to the holy and living God; and we could say to them,

when tempted to repine at their low estate, "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as unto the Lord, and not to men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ."

Now all our foregoing statements will be illustrated and confirmed by what we have to advance under our second head of discourse. We have considered the fact asserted by the apostle, that even slaves, while performing the duties imposed by their slavery, were to be regarded as engaged in the service of Christ: we have now to consider the inference which he derives from the fact, "knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance."

It is clear that the argument of the apostle, if we so call it, not only supposes that slaves as well as free men may gain entrance into heaven, but that higher recompenses may be reached through the patient discharge of the duties of one station as of another. The duties that devolved on the free-man might be very different from those which devolved on the slave; but forasmuch as one was not more in the service of Christ than another, both had the same power of obtaining the rewards of eternity. The apostle's argument must be considered as going to this length: if it stops short of this it holds that the distinctions in society have an influence on man's future portion: and this advances little or nothing to show the unreasonableness of dissatisfaction in those placed in an inferior condition. If the case was the same as in a kingdom or a household, where no amount of diligence on the part of those who hold the inferior, will make them equal with those who enjoy the superior, the slave might feel that he was injured by his slavery—yea, injured irreparably, because for eternity. But if the inheritance of another life lay as open to the slave as to the sovereign—if the position of the master gave him no advantage over the servant so far as the future was concerned, but both had the same recompense placed within their reach, St. Paul might well treat as unimportant the difference in human conditions, and exhort every class to the like diligence in performing its duties. Those whose duties in life are of a menial description may gain as high recompense hereafter as any who move in the first walks of society. There is a wide separation between the king and the peasant, but there is no reason to infer that such separation exists hereafter, supposing that both king and slave enter heaven. The king and the slave may either receive the same crown, or that on the head of the servant outshine that which the potentate wears.

And ought we to be surprised at such a statement as this? We

must perceive at once that if there be no respect of persons with God, he must afford different opportunities to different classes of securing to themselves the glories of immortality. If it be through his appointment that one man fills one situation and another another, there would be a manifest partiality; an undeniable respect of persons, if the higher recompenses of eternity were confined to those who had occupied the higher places in life, and the lower only were within reach of those who had filled the lower. We seem obliged to adopt one of two suppositions—either that there is no difference in future rewards (which is contradicted by the whole tenor of scripture), or that the difference has no connexion with the difference in present rank, but that the rewards are proposed equally to all, and are equally attainable by all. The least consideration would suffice to show the truth of this latter supposition. The degrees of greatness and happiness hereafter will surely be proportioned to men's attainment on earth in the Christian character. The holier a man has become, the richer and more exalted will be his portion. It is holiness which constitutes his meetness or fitness for the inheritance of the saints, and it must be as the fitness increases that the recompense grows. And what is there to prevent the Christian, who fills the meanest place in society, from becoming as holy and as far advanced in the graces of the Gospel as another, more prominent in station and more dignified in office? It certainly cannot be thought that influence, and rank, and wealth have a tendency to the fostering of holiness, or that they place their possessor in a more advantageous position for the culture of those graces which are loveliest and of best report. It might be readily shown that these things have all their attendant dangers; so that if in one sense they open the paths to Christian eminence, in another they throw obstacles in the way. Thus there is in the divine dealings what we may call a system of balancing; if the situation affords greater opportunities for labouring for God, it has greater temptations: and thus, on the whole, it may be no more advantageous to personal holiness than one far more retired, and presenting a far narrower field of action. Hence we can readily understand that those who occupy these very different situations may be active and watchful, as candidates for heaven: so that the man of large resources who can give his thousands towards the endeavour to evangelize the globe, and the minister whose constant employment is in sacred things, and the merchant who must spend large portions of his time in worldly concerns, and the servant completely at the will of another, and whose every day is consumed in drudgery and toil—O all these have each equal

opportunities and equal means of winning a high place in the celestial assembly.

It is the truth which was affirmed by Christ, when he said, "He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man's reward." Our Lord here plainly intimates that there shall be a difference in future rewards, for he speaks of "the prophet's reward," and "the righteous man's reward;" evidently meaning that they will not be the same. But then he just as plainly intimates that the reward may as well be attainable by others besides those who had borne the particular office. The prophet's reward might be won by a man who had not himself been a prophet: if he received a prophet in the name of a prophet, then, whatever his own office in life, he became entitled to the prophet's reward. He might be a slave; one of that despised class to whom St. Paul addressed our text, and who stood, therefore, apparently the furthest removed from those invested with the high dignity of being prophets of the Lord. But nevertheless, it was equally within his power, by an act of Christian faith and compassion, to annihilate at once the vast separation, and to place himself on a level with the prophet, as a competitor for the recompenses of heaven. And thus has the clergyman no necessary superiority over the very meanest in his congregation, when once judged by the everlasting prizes which are set before each. All the duties of the one are indeed of a high and spiritual character; whereas those of the other have no visible connexion with religion: yet may any amongst you, though nothing more than a servant, gain as great eminence in heaven as any of the ministers of the church, whose high employment it is to publish the Gospel of redemption. O, it is not necessary for a man's spiritual advancement, that his profession in life requires him to be conversant with spiritual things, and that his very trade as much obliges him to familiarity with theology, as the profession of the lawyer with jurisprudence. The risk is not to be computed that a clergyman will gradually sink into a mechanical Christianity; that, having constantly to handle great truths, he will grow insensible to their greatness; and that, called frequently to visit sick beds, he will acquire a sort of professional apathy, and be little moved by what would stir others to the most serious inquiry. They know nothing of human nature who do not acknowledge that we are apt to grow indifferent to that to which we are most accustomed; and that the very circumstance of our being, as a matter of business, in contact with what is solemn, is likely to weaken the thinking powers. And we are sure that of all

avocations there are few fraught with more peril to the soul than the clerical. The fear is, that the Bible may become to the clergyman nothing more than a repository of texts; and that, in continually searching it for subjects of public address, he may overlook the materials for his own personal instruction. In his zeal to exhort others to amend their lives, he may be very apt to neglect his own; and though engaged in exhorting others to trimming their lamps, he may never suspect how applicable to himself are those words of the church—"They made me keeper to the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept."

We speak of the dangers attending the call of the clergyman, in order to show that if he had ampler opportunities for labouring for God than the servant with whom we bring him into contrast, he has also greater difficulties and temptations; so that there is no reason, from the professions of the different individuals, why the one should advance further and faster in holiness than the other. If the reward is to be proportioned to the holiness, the prophet's reward may be reached by the meanest of those among whom he prophesies. And this is not the alone reason why the recompense of the master is within reach of the servant. The master may be vastly helped and sustained by the servant: the servant has apparently nothing to do with preaching the Gospel; but it may be in answer to his prayers that the Gospel is faithfully and successfully preached in the neighbourhood. We have so great a confidence in the prevalence of prayer, that we reckon it in the power of the poorest of our hearers to aid us in our preparation for the pulpit, to strengthen us for every pastoral visit, and to uphold us in every effort for the spread of Christian knowledge. And if the servant can thus do so much of the prophet's work, why should he be excluded from the prophet's reward? There is a beautiful community of employment, which ought to prepare us to expect a community of recompense. The servant may be instrumental by his prayers to the enabling the clergyman to cast down the strong holds of ignorance and unbelief; and thus he may be acting silently through every sermon and through every labour of his minister. The clergyman, by his prayers and instructions, on the other hand, may be supporting the servant in all the duties of his station; so that the minister may have much to do with those straight-forward habits and that conscientious industry of the servant, which are winning the approval and the confidence of his employer. In this manner, it is not too much to say, that the servant works as the clergyman, and the clergyman works as the servant; and, therefore, neither is it too much

to say that the clergyman and the servant may strive for the same recompense, and thus the prophet's reward be attained by those who never bore the prophet's office.

In this way it is that Christianity, though altogether opposed to those levelling theories which disaffected men industriously broach, places the highest and the lowest on a par in the competition for eternity. Christianity is the best upholder of the distinctions in society: and he can have read his Bible to little purpose who does not see the appointment of God that there should be rich and poor in the world, master and servant; who does not perceive that want of loyalty is want of religion, and that there is no more direct rebellion against the Creator than resistance to any constituted authority, or the endeavour to bring round that boasted equality in which all shall have the same rights, or, to speak more truly, in which none shall have any. But if Christianity makes it sinful to repine against servitude, it gives a dignity to the servant who would still remain in servitude. It tells the servant, that if faithful here, he may rank with his master hereafter, even though the employment of the master has been the advancement of Christ's cause on earth. And O, it should be a surprisingly cheering thing to those who have to wear away life in the meanest occupations, that, as immortal beings, they are not one jot disadvantaged by their temporal position, but may make as much progress in the Christian race as those placed at the very highest summit in the Christian office. And the cottager who is never heard of, except in his own petty village, and whose only business is with the spade and the plough; and the artisan, who, week after week, must pursue the same dull routine, turning the wheel or throwing the shuttle; and the servant, whose days are consumed in the drudgeries of the kitchen; there is not one of these who need envy the missionary who is diffusing the blessings of the Gospel in heathen lands, or the philanthropist, whose charities are spreading happiness in the parish: for so fixed is the principle that others besides the prophet may win the prophet's reward, that if the missionary or the philanthropist were to visit the cottager, or the manufacturer, or the servant in the kitchen, he would be bound to regard them as his rivals for the prizes of eternity, and to say to them with a fine confession of spiritual equality—"Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance."

There is little that we can have to add in bringing to a conclusion this great subject of discourse. It has been our endeavour to show that there is a sacred character around every lawful

employment, inasmuch as it is in conformity with the service of Christ that you may be religiously occupied when occupied with your worldly calling, and that it is to close your eyes to the ordinance of God, to imagine that in working for the body you cannot also be working for the soul. We have further endeavoured to put forth the truth, that the distinctions of men in their temporal capacities have no corresponding distinction in their eternal; but that however various the situations which Christians occupy, the reward of the inheritance is proposed equally to all. The practical inferences from these several truths have been either drawn as we proceeded, or will suggest themselves to your own minds without any formal deduction. We wish you to feel what an every day thing religion must be if it be any thing but a name. It must wind itself into all the businesses of life; and since baptism hath made every Christian man a priest, it must consecrate the haunts of commerce, and hallow the toil for subsistence. It is an interesting thought to those whose occupations are most oppressive and incessant, that Christ is the master by whom the occupation is imposed—that St. Paul was serving him when making tents as well as in preaching sermons—and that he has recorded the integrity of the Christian minister and the faithfulness of the Christian domestic as suitable examples of the beautiful and encouraging truth to the inhabitants of a globe on whose soil rests the malediction of God, and to whom therefore labour is the most common lot. The ploughman in tilling land may be breaking up the fallow of his own heart; the mariner in steering the vessel may be making his way towards the haven of everlasting rest; the tradesman as he weighs out his goods may be poising and trying himself in the balances of eternity; yea, the very servant as he attends his master, or prepares his meal, may be waiting upon God, and securing his own place at the marriage-supper of the Lamb.

Be it ours, then, to strive with all diligence to serve Christ in our respective vocations. If the vocation be humble it presents its impediments but does not oppose its growth in Christian graces: if it be more exalted it has its perils to admonish us as well as its dignities to ennoble; and we require the greater circumspection that we be not outstripped by those who are our inferiors in every thing but wrestling for chief places in the kingdom of heaven. God grant to all of us so to use the present world as not to abuse it—so to pass through things temporal, that we finally lose not the things eternal—to do whatsoever we have to do heartily, or from the soul; and then our Redeemer who is in heaven will account it as done to himself.

THE CHILDREN OF THE WORLD AND THE CHILDREN OF LIGHT

 REV. T. DALE, A.M.

 ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH, HOLBORN, JULY 31, 1836 *.

And the Lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely : for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light."—LUKE, xvi. 8.

BOTH the order of these words, and the translation, differ from those in the original ; and as the variation will be of considerable importance in the view which we propose to take of the subject, we are anxious that it should be noted in the outset. The text will be preferably arranged and rendered thus : " The children of this world are wiser than the children of light according to their own generation : " according, that is, to their own manner and form of life, to the principles which they have adopted, and to the objects which they pursue.

Wisdom, as understood in this passage, is of a two-fold character : it may consist either in the judicious selection of the end, or in the exact adaptation of the means. Perfect wisdom is the combination of the two—the selection of the best possible end, and the prosecution of it by the best possible means. Those therefore are but partially wise who disparage appropriate means by the unworthiness of the end, or who detract from the excellence of an adequate and becoming end by the unsuitableness or inadequacy of the means.

From these premises we readily attain to a complete understanding of the characters which are opposed to each other in the text. The children of this world pursue an unworthy object, but they are quicksighted in their policy, and unwearied in their diligence, while they pursue it. The children of light, engaged in a matter of the highest importance that can be conceived, too often in the pursuit of it shew little judgment and less diligence. Consequently, the children of this world are wiser than the children of light according to their own generation : in other words, the toys, and the baubles, and the vanities of time, are pursued with a strength of purpose worthy a better cause ; energies and efforts are wasted on

* For the benefit of the St. Ann's Society Schools.

things which perish, which, rightly used, would avail to the saving of the soul.

It will be proper here, and may be profitable (God grant it!) that we on the present occasion discriminate accurately between the two characters—that we examine into the conduct, principles, and object of it; and that we, in conclusion, apply the standard of Scripture to ourselves, in order to determine whose we are, and whom we serve—what we are pursuing, and what we may expect: for wisdom will in the end be justified of all her children; and as the children of light will have their portion in unfading and unmeasurable day—so the ruin of the ungodly will afford through all eternity a fearful demonstration of the solemn truth, that the wisdom of this world is too often foolishness with God.

In regard to the great object of life, man, in every age of the world, and under every variation of life, of moral and intellectual light, does and will differ; but it seems to be universally admitted that he who lives without a specific and decided object is unworthy the name of man. Animal existence he shares in common with the brute; and when intelligence, which is man's peculiar glory, is used for no better purpose than to direct or to diversify the indulgences of appetite, what is this but to turn his glory to shame?

So we speak regarding man only as a *rational* being. How far such a view will be confirmed when *responsibility* is also taken into the reckoning will come before us more appropriately in a subsequent portion of the discourse. We simply insist at present on the necessity that a reasonable being should live to some definite purpose: and if there are those with whom the intelligence of the man goes little further than the intellect of the brute, who are proof against all argument, and insensible to all persuasion, it is evident that they fall into the very lowest ranks of the children of this world; they possess not even the shadow of that apparent wisdom which, however plausible, is found to be delusive and deceptive. Our argument with the children of this world will be, not that they are *without* an object, but that they have erred in the *choice* of it; that they have merged the concerns of eternal duration in the interests of time, and the indulgence of sense; that as to the only portion which can be adequate to the wants of a spiritual and immortal nature, they are walking in a vain show, and disquieting themselves in vain. Were this world all, and were man the only judge, they might do wisely; but the wisdom of the generation that passes is one thing, and the wisdom of eternity

that endures is another ; for in eternity God is judge, not man, and the world is not everything, but nothing.

The children of this world, then, as opposed to the children of light, are those with whom the main object of life has an exclusive reference to the present precarious existence, and whose minds are occupied and engrossed by the concerns of the world that passeth away. Nor is the principle of this definition at all affected by the measure of their aspirations and their aims. One, for example, who is engaged in traffic, may profess to be engaged in a bare competency, while another may be bent on the accumulation of more than princely wealth. One who is aspiring after honour may confine himself to a local or partial pre-eminence ; another may seek to control a nation, or agitate the world. One who is ambitious of fame may court the ephemeral distinction of popular applause, which dies on the breeze that it swells ; another may spend his days in solitude, and occupy his nights in meditation, that his name may be pronounced with reverence in distant lands, and go down to remote ages with the honour which a grateful posterity will pay to those who have enlightened or improved mankind. In these there is no essential evil : the evil arises from the fact that they are misapplied, and that, consequently, the preferment of them is the virtual degradation of that which is intrinsically far more valuable and important ; honour, fame, or affluence, being pursued to the forgetfulness of the soul, and He whom the soul ought first to serve being dishonoured and defrauded thereby.

It is true this line of reasoning does not apply to *all* the children of this world ; for there are some, strange as it may seem, in these evil days, who will exercise all the power and all the intelligence of the soul to prove that the soul itself has no existence. There are some who will contend, with an unholy vehemence, for the dignity of dust, and argue that man was created, or that he created himself, or that he sprung fortuitously into existence—no matter which—merely to fret and fume his hour on the stage of life, and then to moulder into nothingness. With such there can be no true enjoyment of life, or, if weighed in the balance, is too often comprehended in the one brief maxim, “ Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die : ” and all the brilliancy of genius, and all the refinement of taste, can find in such no worthier employment than to wreath the bowl with flowers, and decorate their passage to the grave.

Too many must be ranked among the children of this world who would shrink from the profession of impiety and absurdity like

this; who would neither impute folly to God as though he made all men for nought, nor debase themselves by imagining the materialism of mind; many who pursue an unworthy object from the absence of reflection, and who are practically serving Mammon only because they would defer their obligation to serve God. It is these last alone who are generally to be found amongst the assembly of sabbath worshippers; and to such shall we only now address ourselves; to men whose *conduct* would seem to infer the superiority of the body, while their *creed* acknowledges that superiority of the soul which distances all reckoning—its immortality; men who are strangely content with the short-sighted policy of substituting the means for the end, never considering that a time is approaching when the end will be weighed in the balances of the sanctuary, and if it be found wanting will become the source of irremediable woe. How can it be otherwise, when men “choose darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil?”

Here, however, it may be objected by some, that the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely. Yes, but it is the *lord* who speaks in the parable—the rich man who was the master of the unjust steward; and who may be supposed, without doing any violence to the context, to have shared his views of worldly policy, and to have spoken in reference to them alone: the text is the comment of Jesus himself, and we must beware of confounding the two. The ground of the commendation is expressly stated and explained: “The lord commended the unjust steward because he had done wisely.” But there is limitation in the comment which completely justifies the view which we have taken: “The children of this world are wiser than the children of light, according to their own generation.” And what is “their own generation?” What was it in the day of Christ? The Lord describes it, in the most emphatic terms of reproach, as “an evil and adulterous generation:” “a perverse and wicked generation:” a generation which was about to reject the Son of Man, and consequently to reject also the counsel of God against themselves; a generation on which already rested the curse of blindness, and on which will come down hereafter the curse of blood. But these vehement expressions may be thought to require some qualification in the present day, because the temptations presented to the corrupt nature of man is now of a different character—because there is now more of sensual indulgence, and less of sanguinary and malignant persecution—whose wisdom, according to the generation of this world, is a wisdom which does not extend its views beyond

that which is palpable and perishable. A man, for example, who absorbs existence in the pursuit of wealth does not expect to carry it with him to the grave: he knows, when he reflects, that naked as he came out of his mother's womb, naked must he return thither again. He only puts away the contingent nearness ~~and the~~ eventual certainty of that return. He calculates on the continuance of life, that he may not be compelled to think of the probability of death. In every such case, therefore—every case in which the mind, with all its energies, and the body, with all its appetites, and the heart, with all its affections, are engaged, or rather merged, in the concerns of time—since one alternative is unavoidable, either the testimony of scripture is null and void, or that which appears wisdom in the present moment to man, who judges by the outward appearance, will be transformed into foolishness by the touch of death, when he who lays up treasure to himself finds, to his utter consternation and despair, that he is not rich towards God.

Nor is this to be asserted only in reference to the pursuit of wealth; it applies to every variety of pursuit in which men engage, to the forgetfulness of God, and the detriment of their own souls. It applies to every age and to either sex—to the trifling of the child, and the toiling of the man—to the petty feeling which lives in the applause of the vulgar, and to the lofty ambition that aspires to rule a nation and to shake the world. The bubbles that men blow with the breath of life vary in the dimensions and the colours which they exhibit, but they are alike in this, that sooner or later they must all burst. Man may attain to that for which he laboured, or he may not; but taking the brighter side—putting out of sight the thousands who are disappointed, and the tens of thousands who are discontented—supposing the desired object not only attained, but meeting, fully meeting, while it lasts, the most sanguine anticipations of the possessor, who shall warrant its continuance? Who shall make a covenant with death, and so enter into a covenant with the grave that when he has laid up much goods for many years, and is saying to his soul, "Eat, drink, and be merry," he shall be secured against the sudden and startling summons, "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee?" Who shall ensure that when the body is resplendent with the garniture of luxury, the gold will not become dim, and the fine gold changed; that joyfulness of spirit will not be turned into heaviness; and the summer friends of prosperity be scattered in a moment, and the daughters of music be brought low by the alarm of sudden death? At last the end must come when the dust shall return to the earth

as it was, and the spirit return unto God that gave it. On every sepulchral stone, on every monumental tablet, are inscribed the words of the preacher, "Vanity of vanities ! all is vanity." We feel as we gaze that the wisdom of their own generation is extinct ; and where is the wisdom for eternity ? Where is that wisdom that was taught by Him who said, " Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness ; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations ?"

Thus, then, we see the object, and with it the principle and the conduct of the children of this world. Their object is at once uncertain as to its attainment, and precarious as to its duration. Their principles of right are modified, and too often distorted by the relation of the means to the end, conscience being too often unnaturally driven out that it may run parallel with interest or with convenience. Their conduct, if not glaringly defective in a moral sense, is at least marked by the prolific cause of all practical forgetfulness of God. We see, however, that putting aside the unworthiness of their present object, there is often much to admire and to approve in the means by which they follow it : there is much of wise policy, of prudent forethought, of persevering diligence, of patient endurance. They are content to rise up early, and late take rest, and to eat the bread of carefulness. Inclination and indulgence are not allowed to traverse the purpose that has been deliberately formed. Whatever interferes with the accomplishment of their main object will be prescribed as hurtful, or disregarded as superfluous. The ascent up which they are toiling is steep and rugged, but they will never rest until they have attained the summit of their hopes. Such, then, are *the children of the world*.

Look now on the children of *light* ; on those who are the professed disciples and followers of Him who came as a Light into the world ; who believe that with Him are laid up riches that are incorruptible, and honours that cannot be removed, and crowns that cannot fade ; while we recognize their two characters—strangers and pilgrims on earth ; and who avow that they are seeking a better country, that is, an heavenly ; that they are looking for a city, and hastening to a city, which hath foundations, whose maker and builder is God. These are wise, not according to their *own*, but to *all* generations. They are wise, at least if Scripture be admitted as the judge between them and their opponents : they have chosen the only end that is consistent with the dignity of the rational, and commensurate with the destiny of the immortal : because they have recognized the pre-eminence of the soul, which is the breath of

God, over the body, which is the dust of the earth ; because, having held the balance with even hand, and placed in one scale all that Scripture promises, and in the other all that the world can give, they have preferred “ the good part ” which is not to be taken from them. With regard to the professed purpose of their conduct, they are truly wise ; for it is, that they will seek first the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness ; it is that which is neither uncertain as to its attainment, for “ every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth ”—nor yet precarious as to its duration, for “ we know that when the earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

Now in what, it may be demanded, consists the superiority of the children of this world ? In the judgment, we answer, with which they select their means— in the diligence and perseverance with which they employ them. The unjust steward, unable to labour, and ashamed to beg, thought only of providing himself a refuge when ejected from his master’s service : and this refuge his policy secured at the expense of his integrity ; effectually preventing others from revealing his delinquency by making them partners in the fraud. The wisdom of such conduct in reference to the sole end in view, the provision of a temporary shelter, cannot be disputed ; though this seeming wisdom would be folly, stark folly, when we reckoned on encountering, face to face, a heart-exploring Judge—one with whom there could be no secret, and one from whom there could be no appeal. Now to such a judgment the children of light look forward, and by the anticipation of it they profess to shape their course : but how rarely do we see them acting in apparent remembrance of this *now* ; walking as beneath the eye of God ; fighting the good fight of faith, as though guarded and preserved by his almighty power ; continuing instant in prayer ; preventing the night watches, or the morning dawn, that they may meditate on the Word of God ! How rarely do we see them adequately intent on that one object which they profess to desire beyond every other ; giving all diligence to make their calling and election sure ; forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before, and pressing towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus ! They are cold and languid when compared with the busy hive who are swarming all around them, and who pursue the sweets and the flowers of this world—flowers that fade, and sweets that pall and cloy. They are listless in collecting, and neglectful in guarding,

the store that is laid up for eternity. They do not, as they should, anxiously expect and eagerly embrace all opportunities of occupying their talent to its most and only profitable purpose, and glorify their Father who is in heaven. They are content, if not with a *negative*, with a *negligent* service ; concerned to avoid condemnation, but not to attain to holiness ; to escape the penalty of the slothful servant, but not to aspire to the honour that cometh only from God. They are loitering by the way, when they ought to be running in the race : they are putting on their armour, when they ought to be warring a good warfare : they are reclining luxuriously beneath the shade, when they ought to be bearing the burden and heat of the day. They pray, but devotion languishes on their lips : they unclosethe the sacred volume, the eye glances over its page : and too often the living word makes no impression on the memory, and effects no lodgment in the heart. The duty performed, they are as though they had not been engaged in it : and did not the breath of the Spirit keep alive the slumbering embers of vital religion in the heart, their light would be extinguished in utter darkness. We look on them, and acknowledge how truly it was said of the apostle (and alas ! we acknowledge it most feelingly when we look most searchingly into ourselves), “ The righteous are scarcely saved.” We acknowledge that it is of the Lord’s mercy that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not, though too often our obedience fails.

And yet, with all that is thus to be acknowledged and lamented, as to the comparative supineness of the children of the light, it is at least an unspeakable blessing to have made a right choice as to the end ; to have put the hand to the plough, and, though making but slow advances, not to be looking back ; to feel, amidst all our deficiencies and imperfections, that we are seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness ; that though we are sore let and hindered in running the race that is set before us, still we do run, not as uncertainly ; for the prize of immortality is reserved to us beyond the goal of death : this still can be a solace in those afflictions which are inseparable from the condition of human existence—those troubles to which all are born as sparks fly upward ; and by which, sooner or later, all will be encompassed as the sparks fly around. This consciousness can alone impart support to the soul amidst all vicissitudes, and build the hope for eternity fast and firm on a foundation that cannot be moved : this alone, when the shadows are lengthening the eve of our days, and the clouds are condensing fast around the setting sun of life, can hold forth the hope and

promise of a brighter dawn, which shall know no eclipse or overshadowing while eternity shall endure. To the godly there arises light in the darkness; and it is then they vindicate their proper appellation of "children of the light" when all besides is wrapped in gloom. God is light, and in him is no darkness at all; and they look for an eternal habitation with him in the light which no man can approach unto, that no man hath seen nor can see; but which they shall behold with unaverted eye when raised above the frailties, and released from the encumbrances of the flesh: they shall in the end be made like their Master, and shall see him as he is: for here is the warrant for the perseverance of those whose hearts are indeed sincere with God: the desire of a soul who has respect unto the end is from Him; the infirmity which attends on the employment of the means is all its own; and the hour is coming when all the infirmity shall be forgiven, and all the desire shall be fulfilled.

How, then, in the last place, are we to determine what is our state and condition in regard to the all-important choice of the end in life; whether we are at this moment living to the only purpose which is worthy of rational and immortal men; whether we are so walking in the light that our end, come when it may, shall not be darkness, but that we shall abide for ever in glory, honour, and immortality, with the God whom we have honoured, and the Saviour whom we have loved, and the souls which, as feeble and unworthy instruments, we have helped to save? Many tests might be proposed; but that to which we are led more immediately, on the present occasion, not only by the object of our assemblage, but by the words of the Lord himself on the employment of what we mistakenly call our substance, but which Jesus more properly designates as "the mammon of unrighteousness." For it is *here* that men too frequently fall into a signal and serious error; they reckon that they have a property, when in truth they have only a stewardship: they reckon that they are vested with absolute power, when in fact they are only put in trust: they reckon they have a right of expenditure, when they will be called to render an account. They forget that their substance is their Lord's, not their's; and that to misapply is virtually to defraud.

But this error will be scattered at once when we dwell for an instant on the conclusion drawn by the Lord—with which also we will conclude. He asks, with a power against which no unseared conscience can be proof, "If ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?"

And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?" Accordingly, two motives will weigh, and ought to weigh with every true believer, in the right disposal of that which God has given him to dispense: first, that he is to honour the Lord with all his substance; next, that of his stewardship he must give an account. These motives apply equally to every grade and condition of life, to every variety of circumstances and of ability: for "he that is faithful in that which is least will be faithful also in much." God may be as eminently and as signally honoured by the mite of the widow or the orphan, as by the costly offering of the noble and the princely. "A man is accepted according to that which he hath, and not according to that which he hath not."

There is the same equality in judgment as in death. The lord of millions and the children of the soil lie side by side in the place of sepulchre; the only difference is, that the one rests beneath mouldering marble, the other beneath the indestructible sod: and side by side will they stand also, amidst the multitudes which no man can number, when all nations shall be gathered before the tribunal of the descending Judge. For what will be the distinction in that hour at which we must all be confronted with each other, and with our Judge? What will be the distinction then, think you? Not who *had* most, but who *loved* most: not who possessed the *five* talents, or the *one*; but who so occupied his *allotted portion* as in largest measure to glorify his God therewith. *He* will then take the pre-eminence who, roused into the love of man by the love of God, and freely giving for Christ's sake of his abundance, or of his need, is receiving freely of the blood of Christ, did most, in proportion to his power, to lighten the load of human wretchedness, to scatter the dark cloud of human wretchedness, to rescue from impending destruction the souls that were ready to perish, to reclaim the wanderer from the error of his way, to bring back those who were as sheep going astray, to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls. Light will then condense around him as her favoured child, though on earth he may have been lodged in a hovel, or languished in a hospital. Though not a stone may have pointed to his unburied dust, nor a tear have been dropped on his tomb, light will condense around the head of him who did most to demonstrate his sense of the love that passeth knowledge, his high and deep estimate of the salvation that was beyond all price; who followed most clearly in the steps of his divine Master, who drank most deeply into his spirit, who was conformed most entirely to his ways. Such shall

then stand forth amidst the countless multitudes who are to be judged as the true children of light : and though it was a cup of cold water only that they were able to give in the name of a disciple, verily they shall not lose their reward.

How the subject bears upon the case of that institution for which I am here to plead, why need I detain you to observe ? Who does not know the principle upon which it was established is the love of Christ, and that the practice which it exhibits is the love of man ? Who does not know that it is numbered at once amongst the most extensive and most meritorious of those institutions which are the redeeming glory of the land, which has averted many of the curses of the Omnipotent from deluging this guilty metropolis in blood ? Who needs to be informed that this institution not only affords to two hundred children the benefits of Christian instruction (for in this it is equalled by many), but that to more than three-fourths of that number—many of them orphans, all of them necessitous—it extends not only the benefits of a refuge, but the comforts and the tendernesses of a home ? Who does not know, too, that it has expanded to its present ample growth under the fostering influence of Christian benevolence, called forth in great measure by appeals like these ?

For what purpose will you be cited there but to give an account of your stewardship ? and how can you expect to have done *wisely* unless you have done *liberally* ; unless you have so dispensed the unrighteous mammon as that He who will not overlook the slightest act of mercy to the meanest of his little ones, shall approve your fidelity, and commit to your trust the true riches ? You cannot expect a worthier cause, or desire a more urgent and more affecting appeal, than that which is this day presented to your eyes and to your hearts. You are called to bestow a two-fold benefit. How can you confer a greater blessing upon those children, who by their appearance plead more powerfully than any advocate can plead for them—how can you confer a greater blessing upon them than by aiding to train them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord ? And how can you better pour consolation into the hearts of afflicted parents—of the widowed, or perhaps worse than widowed, mother—of her, it may be (such cases do occur, and we know them)—of her who is a wife, and yet *not* a wife—for the body of that which was once an intelligent being, is but the sepulchre of the mind when the light of reason is quenched for ever : I ask, then, how can you better console these bleeding hearts—bleeding, it may be, with remembrance of brighter and happier days—than by sheltering

in this friendly asylum the more than orphan, and therefore the worse than fatherless ?

Brethren, I cannot but persuade myself that I speak to those who know how to value the blessing of him who is ready to perish, or those who are concerned to lay up against the time to come, that balm of memory, the thankful overflowings of a grateful heart, and thus to "make friends of the mammon of unrighteousness : " I cannot but believe that I speak to such. But if there are those who will not do what we ask for the sake of humanity and compassion and sympathy and brotherly love ; if there are those who, adjured in the name of their God, will not do it for the sake of helpless infancy, and desolate orphanhood, and destitute widowhood, and that they may temper the iron of misery entering into the souls of those who have fallen from a higher state, and perhaps having given charity to the offspring of others, come hither to ask it for their own : if, I say, there are those who will not do it for the sake of any or all of these, O let them do it for *Christ's* sake ; nay, let them do it for their *own* sake. For unless you give much, how can you know you love much ? and if you do not look with love and pity on those little ones of Christ, how can you love Christ at all ? And when those who *do* love Christ are received into everlasting habitations, where will be the portion of those who love him not, or whom he has loved in vain ?

But *you*, children of light, imitate for once the wisdom of the children of this world. Provide *now* against the day of adversity. Record in this hallowed place a proof of your sincerity, a proof of your love. Lay up in store a good foundation against the time to come, that you may lay hold on eternal life. For here is a question from the Word of God—and let us all look to it how we answer, for it will one day be asked again, and asked not as I now ask, collectively, but of each separately and singly : " He that hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him ? " O brethren, let him, that is, who holds his hand (if there be such), let him who shall harden his heart (if there be one such), only ask of himself, " How dwelleth the love of God in me ? and if the love of God dwelleth not in me, how can I expect to dwell in that heaven of glory which consists in the fulness of the love of God ? "

THE EARTHLY TABERNACLE AND THE HEAVENLY INHERITANCE.

REV. F. W. MEADOWS,

SHEPHERD'S MARKET CHAPEL, JUNE 26, 1836*.

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."—2 COR. v. 1.

THE connexion which the late Mr. Thomas Hancox held with this place of worship, as well as his own private worth to us as a friend, make it proper and our duty to notice his death thus publicly. As brother Leach took for his text this morning, so say we, "He was a faithful man and feared God above many. He might with much consistency be called the father of the cause of Christ as at present existing within these walls; for but for him, under God (to whom as the Great First Cause we trace all things), these doors had remained closed, and the ninety-six now constituting this church been strangers to the communion of saints, and forgiveness of sins. But whilst we devote this hour to the specific object of a funeral sermon for one to whom this society owes its existence and part of its maintenance, we dare not entertain for a moment, as any of our plan in this evening's discourse, a wish to eulogise. Were we so far to transgress the known mind of the deceased, we should fancy before us the spirit of the departed beaming a frown from his dignified face whilst his honest tongue exclaimed, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto God be all the glory." We shall therefore do on this occasion as we believe our deceased friend your benefactor would have wished had he been aware that his death would have received such public notice in this place. We shall try to preach not ourselves but Christ. May the Holy Ghost, by whom Mr. Hancox was converted and made highly useful in his day and generation, (for "he was a faithful man and feared God above many,") give a word to speak in season, of which we may say in leaving the sanctuary, "How good is it!"

Well might it be said, "Life and immortality are brought to

* A Funeral Sermon for the late Mr. Thomas Hancox, of Oxford-street.

light through the Gospel:" for what know we of man's origin, present condition, or future destinies, but by the Gospel? Without this Book, in vain the most profound mind dives into the mysteries of things past, present, or to come: but by this Book "He who runs may read" how "the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." It is to this book we are indebted for a solution of the cause of present calamities, of the misery, grief, and death which every where surround us; and to it we owe our knowledge of those brighter scenes where "God shall wipe all tears from off all faces." Man's immortality, then, is the *summum bonum* of the text, and that immortality in connexion with the far "more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." It is evident that to recommend the Gospel and to set forth its truths, God the Holy Ghost led the various penmen to employ figurative terms. These figures were of limited correctness, and but of limited, as all figures must have about them that which is unapt as well as apt. Figures, therefore, must not be pushed too far, nor examined too minutely, but taken upon the broad *primâ facie* intention.

So would we strive to handle the figures employed in the text; where, first, we have presented a tenant occupying two distinct and dissimilar residences; secondly, to notice why the tenant is called upon to quit the one and enter the other; and thirdly, how superior the latter residence is to the former.

First, The text presents the figure of A TENANT OCCUPYING TWO DISTINCT AND DISSIMILAR RESIDENCES; *a tabernacle*, a house, or earthly house of tabernacle, and "a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

But as we have no less to do with the tenant than the tenement, a passing word is first requisite relative to its character. The tenant is the soul whose nature is such that, though susceptible of various changes, it is capable of dissolution. It can be a soul dead in sin, and dead to sin; but it cannot be a soul dead by sin. It can be a soul in a state of death as a figure, but not as a fact; dead to God, happiness, goodness, peace, and the like. Original sin has made the soul dead to these things, and in this state being from our birth possessed by us, we are disposed to grow up hardened and wicked characters, "in whom, that is, in our flesh, dwelleth no good thing:" for the tenant being evil, the tenement becomes as a nest of unclean birds. Now power divine can raise that soul so that a

new impetus being given, it can glorify God here, and live with him hereafter.

The soul, the tenant, proves its capability of change of state by change of disposition, as thus : God made man upright, but in Adam all die as to moral goodness, yet in Christ all the redeemed live as to moral excellence, and through the grace thus given after the death of the body reign with him for ever and ever. God made man in fact a living soul. Sin makes man, in a figure, an insensible soul. Grace renews that soul, so that we are not dead but sleep, and sleep sweetly, dreaming of the glories of that resurrection morn when the dead, small and great, shall stand before God. The soul, or spiritual and therefore eternal part of man, is the tenant.

This tenant occupies two distinct and dissimilar residences : first, a tabernacle and a tabernacle made of earth ; secondly, a building or house immaterial and eternal.

First, *a tabernacle* and a tabernacle made of earth ; the body, of which the soul is the tenant. A tabernacle well sets forth this tenement, and earth literally describes its origin (Adam, *i.e.* *red earth*) : for dust we are, and to dust we shall return. As a tabernacle our bodies are feeble, fading, temporary, tottering, portable, and insecure, like the tabernacle set up by Moses in the wilderness. We were designed for the in-being and worship of God : but like that tabernacle we are prostituted to mere secular purposes ; the glory is departed, the gold has become dim, and the fine gold is changed ; yet, like as the tabernacle was once, so there is much of glory and grandeur about man ; and as a tabernacle to worship in, these bodies may serve for the whole journey ; yea, even after we get into the church on earth, of which Canaan was a striking type. But this tenement will not last for ever : it is of the earth earthy, and must give up that which is of heaven heavenly. Our bodies in their *present*, or in their first state, present not perpetuity ; they are material. Now that which is material must wear out : therefore Adam himself was made to be a probationer, and then to be changed from glory to glory by the Spirit of God. The immortal soul occupies this tabernacle, which by time must wear out ; but is now commonly taken down before worn out, and in a state of apparent vigour folded together and deposited in the grave. Five days before his death Mr. H. was in excellent health ; the tabernacle seemed to bid fair to stand for many years : but the tenant was wanted, and when gone the temporary residence fell.

Secondly, this tenant is next called upon to inhabit a house,

which thought presents as a *stationary, secure, permanent, elevated, and diversified habitation*—almost every way opposite to that from which the tenant has escaped. Our future home will be our final home: wherever our souls are found after death they will go no more out for ever, but will inhabit eternally a fixed, secure, permanent, and elevated, though diversified situation. They will be eternally with God or devils—secure in heaven or hell; see all the way by which they reached their home, and reap a crop of joy or woe, proportionate to the seed sown in the days of the flesh. I do not mean to say that any in heaven will be other than completely happy, or in hell other than completely miserable; yet still hold there are degrees in both, *as the vessel by sin or grace has been expanded to receive quantity*. Heaven and hell, like earth, are places of order and not of confusion, as far as God is concerned; and every disembodied soul ranks in its own order: Judas went to “his own place,” and Lazarus was “carried by angels into Abraham’s bosom.” I can never separate in my mind heaven or hell being places as well as states; and whilst I cannot answer the inquiry, Where are they? I can suppose God in Christ is the centre of heaven’s house, and saints, according to the measure of their faith, near to that centre or far off from it. Scripture says “One star differeth from another star in grandeur; so also is the resurrection of the dead.” 1 Cor. xv. 41, 42. And when John saw the second tenement of the soul, the “house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens,” “round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats four and twenty elders sitting clothed in white raiment, and they had on their heads crowns of gold.” Rev. iv. 4. Why should we object to the doctrine of degrees of glory? Did not our Lord say, “In my Father’s house are many mansions?” John, xiv. 9: and are we not convinced that individuality renders a local abode indispensable; that as our Saviour will ever retain his individuality and we ours, they must be the most honoured, and most happy, because most capable of happiness, who more immediately surround his glorified humanity? I fear the reason we object is through selfishness, or Satan, perhaps both, uniting to teach us to carry earthly feelings into this house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Yet I think there are even earthly scenes and earthly circumstances which exhibit man as conscious he could be happy in one place, whilst he has no capacity for happiness in another, and yet that other more honourable, had he capacity for enjoying it. Take, for instance, an amateur chorus

singer, and an amateur prima donna—could the former vie with the latter, and be happy? Take children who die in infancy—can they know the pain or the bliss of an adult? I think not, and shall beg the question. But without compromising the opinion I collect from scripture and analogy, whilst I believe they that have the most faith in this world will be most capable and possess the most happiness in the world to come, I would venture a harmless flight of fancy, in which, if we conclude aright, all objections to these facts may perhaps cease. We are to “know as we are known,” as well as “be for ever with the Lord.” Is not man’s knowledge to progress with eternity? What soul, when just delivered from the tabernacle, could bear the full blaze of all the Godhead dwelling bodily in Christ? May not the idea of a circle (we have already supposed it), and our Lord Jesus Christ the centre of that circle, be a fact; infinite space the house not made with hands; eternity bringing forth more of the glories of the Lamb that was slain; and as these glories develop themselves, the circle, the inner circle spreading wide, goes on admitting from the outer circle to its gaps, until all glorified flesh see him together, and they of little faith, and they of strong faith, join in the song of Moses and the Lamb before the throne. It may be so: of this we are sure, there is no jealousy in heaven, no domination in heaven, no lording it over God’s heritage in heaven; but each does that which here ought to be done amongst the brethren of our Lord—“esteem others better than himself.” The second tenement occupied by the soul is a permanent, stationary, secure, and elevated, if diversified tenement; called therefore in the text, “a house,” and because the comforts of saints are contemplated by the passage, “a house in heaven.”

But as Abraham said to Dives, so say we to the unconverted: “Son, remember.” This house is only for God’s friends, his children, who believe in Christ, walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, taking up the cross and following Jesus. For should you die without a change of heart, there is prepared a house not made with hands, eternal in hell; a prison house, a house of madness and despair: where every forked flame, and every shriek, will have appended to it, “This is for eternity!” O, sinner, what a game of hazard you are playing! You have staked your immortal soul against pleasure; and if you win, what is your gain? A bubble that will burst just as you grasp your longings; leaving a strong poison in your hand, wherewith the finger of conscience will inscribe upon your hearts, “Vanity of vanities! this also is vanity.” I

charge you, in the name of God, to give up a vain pursuit after happiness apart from godliness, declaring, in the name of my Master, "Sin shall not go unpunished," and that they who "sow unto the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption"—accursed from God, and a home where all exclaim, "We are tormented in this place." O, thoughtless sinner, bear in mind your end: think on the day of judgment, on standing before God, and hearing the righteous sentence of, "Take these my enemies"—yes, you are God's enemies—"and cast them into outer darkness, prepared for the devil and his angels." Your soul lives, but in a tabernacle, a feeble, fading, temporary, tottering building. This night that soul may be required of thee; turned out of thy tabernacle, and turned into hell, "with all the people that forget God." What will you do there? There is no pleasure in hell: "The smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever." Rev. xiv. 11. No parties for sabbath excursions there; no evening boon companions there; no houses of lewdness and intemperance there; no merry song or lascivious jest; no plays, balls, or cards; no people that *mean* to repent, for they *do* repent; no people that *mean* to become godly, for they *cannot* become godly; no people that hope to be saved there, for they are shut up in black darkness and despair for ever. Jude, 13. What will you do in hell? You will think, and think, and think, "Woe is me, for I am lost!—lost—for ever lost!" What a mercy you are not lost yet! for

" While the lamp holds out to burn,
The vilest sinner may return."

That excellent man, whose death calls us to these thoughts, was once an inconsiderate sinner, such as you are. He broke the sabbath, much as you do; loved what is called pleasure, much as you do; went sometimes to the house of God, much as you do; thought dissenters too rigid, much as you do; yet did not doubt but that he should get to heaven, much as you do. But God opened his eyes: when about seventeen years of age he went to hear the late Rev. G. Burder preach, and whilst the sermon made little or no impression, the hymn was ordered of God to his conversion. May you be arrested by the lines which stopped him, and led to his becoming a member, deacon, and warm friend in the Church of Christ. These were the lines:

" Come ye wretched souls to Jesus,
Weak and wounded, sick and sore :
Jesus ready stands to save us,
Full of pity joined with power.
He is able—He is willing: doubt no more.

And we add, Delay no more; so that, if suddenly overtaken by the arrow of death, your end might lead us to say, "He was a faithful man, and feared God above many."

I proceed, seeing our souls are as tenants, occupying two distinct and dissimilar buildings, to note, secondly, **WHY THIS TENANT IS CALLED UPON TO QUIT THE EARTHLY TABERNACLE, AND OCCUPY THE HOUSE NOT MADE WITH HANDS.**

First, *Because the lease is run out.* "The days of our years are threescore and ten:" that is what we call the allotted period: after that we are living on sufferance, or may be said to hold by trespass rather than lease; whilst during the prescribed term we are subjected to a clause which declares "we know not what a day or an hour may bring forth;" and another, "that in the midst of life we are in death." Mr. Hancox did not reach sixty, whilst more than half of those born die before they are twenty-five. God has said how long man *may* live, but not promised he *shall* live to those days.

Secondly, *Because the strength is run out.* The body is incapable of perpetuity; its very living prepares it for dying. It is like the soil of the globe; however good, crop after crop exhausts it: and I scarce know which is the most to be dreaded evil, an exhausted body with an active mind, or a paralyzed mind in an active body. This we believe a reason why the tabernacle gives up the tenant—the tenant wears out the tenement.

Thirdly, *The design is run out:* "it is finished;" and we give up the ghost. They have been preserved in unity for a specific purpose, and when that purpose is accomplished, the tabernacle must mingle with its kindred earth, whilst the soul must go and tell of the deeds done in the body, whether good or evil. Without a body we cannot act, though we can both suffer and enjoy; therefore God giveth to every man his own body, that by that body he may shew forth nature or grace, and so become meet for a future state. The spiritual cannot be fit for eternal companionship with the material; for the material is gross, and cannot become pure but by filtration through death: whilst the soul may become even in time renewed after the image of Christ, and meet for the "inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved for you who are kept by the power of God, through faith, ready to be revealed at the last day."

The tenant, then, is called to leave the tabernacle, because it is but a tabernacle in which we "see through a glass darkly," and "groan, being burdened." The tenant is called to leave the taber-

nacle, that it, the tabernacle, may suffer the unmitigated part of the curse, and die; which it cannot until the soul be separated from it. The tenant is called to leave the tabernacle, because God has prepared some better thing for us who through grace believe; and a worse state for those who have not fled for refuge to the hope set before them in the gospel. The tenant leaves the tabernacle because, at length, it finds an aperture through which it can escape and go to God, which is far better. Oft, in its sojourn in this tabernacle, it has said, "O that I had the wings of a dove! for then would I flee away and be at rest." Now the door of the cage is opened by stern, yet friendly death, and swift as the passing thought we rise to the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Need I say more on the subject why the soul is called to leave the body? I can but add, It is done because in the body we cannot fully enjoy God; or because in the body we cannot fully experience the wrath of God: for the same means which raise a saint to the possession of the heavenly, all sink the sinner into possession of his hellish inheritance. Death bears me to such joys as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard; or to such griefs as eye hath not seen, ear heard, or the heart of man conceived. We that are in the body can but guess, and poorly guess, the change effected by death, the rapture or the woe which instantly succeeds: for this we thank God, and in it take courage, that "absent from the body we are present with the Lord." Man of the world, hast thou ever seen Arabia's sands? League after league they stretch their withering arms; nor can the traveller comprehend its boundless waste, or fathomless depth. Let your imagination rest on this vast mass of atoms, and in comparison with it consider one grain of sand; and believe us when we say, All you have known of misery on earth compared with that of hell, will be as insignificant as the latter is to the former. Man of God, have you seen the sea? Your happiest moments at a throne of grace, or in the sanctuary, or under the full assurance of faith, have only been what a drop of water is to the sea. Cheer up, tried Christian; we are going by a right way to a country where sighing and sorrow flee away, and God wipes all tears from all faces: where there shall be "no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him, and they shall see his face, and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there, and they need no candle, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light, and they shall reign for ever and ever." Rev. xxii. 3—5.

The tenant, then, is called upon to quit the tabernacle, because, if God's, it is not good enough for him whom the Lord delighteth to honour; and if Satan's, it is not miserable enough for him that is of your father, (O, wicked man) even the devil. With each the present is a temporary abode—the best or the worst that we are to know. May it prove the worst, that so, when the dissolution comes, we may find our souls in “the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

I have now to consider, thirdly, HOW SUPERIOR THE LATTER RESIDENCE IS TO THE FORMER; and this I think will be best effected by noting carefully the phraseology employed.

First, *it is “not made with hands,”* but is a place, as well as a state, rising as the spontaneous consequence of God's presence. This makes heaven, as we are sometimes favoured with a knowledge of, during our worldly pilgrimage. Paul once could not tell whether in the body or out of the body, because he saw things it were impossible to utter: and every glimpse we get of the glory hereafter to be revealed, shows it is not made with hands. Of some things we read, “God said let there be,” and there “was;” and of others, “God made them also:” but the house in heaven wants not the word or act to call into being; for there emanates that from the Divine glory which constitutes all space a heaven, save where sin is. Therefore the superiority of the latter residence to the former is, that no hand, human or divine, is requisite or employed for its creation. God is there in all the glory, holiness, and peculiarities, of his nature, which must constitute it a house not made with hands—a permanent, stable, secure, elevated, dignified, and diversified home; of which St. Paul says (Heb. xii. 21), “Wherefore we receive a kingdom that cannot be moved,” and we add from the text, because “not made with hands.”

Secondly, *Its superiority is its perpetuity. Eternal.* Had any man lived from the creation to the end of time, he had lived through many dispensations, ages, and centuries; had seen vast sights, but at last must behold what constitutes the visible heavens “pass away with a great noise, and the elements melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein burnt up.” But the house not made with hands remains eternal; time cannot affect it, for it is not within time's domains. It is beyond, above, without the reach of time. Is no more affected by time than God is, and can no more cease to be, than God can cease to be. Its character is *eternal*.

What a wonderful and what a desirable state in which to have a dwelling, especially when you consider,

Thirdly, *Its superiority lies in this*, that the house is not only not made with hands and eternal, *but is in heaven*, or in the heavens, in joy, happiness, purity, light, peace, love—"nothing there that defileth or worketh a lie." It is where God is, with whom we want to be; where sin is not, from which we long to flee. Where our brethren who died in the faith are, with whom we long to join in swelling forth that anthem of praise which has grace for its keynote, and "Christ the substance of the song." In the heavens; we are going to the house not made with hands; what an exhilarating thought! To die is gain; for at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord; but absent from the body, present with the Lord. Present with him in heaven, *and for ever present*. Who fears to die? Who but must desire mortality were swallowed up of life? And who but would exclaim, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly?" Wait, and while you wait "watch and pray, that no man rob thee of thy crown. Wait, I say—

"Yet a little, and you know
Joyful entrance shall be given,
All your sorrows left below,
And earth exchang'd for heaven."

I conclude then by observing, *first, the country to which the redeemed of the Lord go is superior to this, for it is heaven*. Let us not then selfishly mourn when our dear friends are called to those regions. We do not find this world a heaven. No; as the child's hymn says, "Here we suffer grief and pain." There pain, mental or physical, is a weed that cannot grow; none say they are sick or sad, but are as the angels. Our dear brother Hancox is, we believe, removed to that better country, "for he was a faithful man and feared God above many;" whilst we, in secular and spiritual things, as well as that church of which he was deacon, shall often miss him. Yet for his gain we will rejoice, "bless God, and" (in faith upon Him who raised up for this cause our departed friend), "take courage." We cannot think that the Head of the church will suffer the candlestick to be removed out of this place, because this faithful agent is no longer here to guarantee our expenses. May we rather think he means to raise up many who, when they hear of our loss, will find a voice behind them, saying, "Go and do likewise."

Secondly, *Not only the country is better, but the building is better*.

This mortal shall put on immortality, and this corruptible incorruption, and we shall be changed into the image of Christ : for we are again to see our bodies, claim our bodies, regain our bodies ; not as tabernacles, but as spiritual bodies—bodies like unto our Lord's glorious body ; bodies that are all mind, in which there is no darkness ; bodies that hunger and thirst not, decay not, but are like the second Adam's, the Lord from heaven. Our tabernacle must be dissolved ; our flesh must be refined, must sleep and moulder in the grave, until the angel stand with one foot on the earth, and the other on the sea, to proclaim, by the authority of Him that sitteth on the throne, "There shall be no more time." Then our identical but immaterial bodies shall come forth ; they that have done good to the resurrection of the just, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of God's curse. Then spirit shall know spirit, and perhaps not until then. Then Satan's chains of darkness will be taken off, and he with the wicked will sink lower and lower into the bottomless pit ; whilst the righteous will rise higher and higher into the mind, knowledge, and enjoyment of God. You then will again see brother Hancox, and be able to comprehend with all saints, "the height, and depth, and length, and breadth, and know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge"—love which raised him up to be the first step to some of your hearing the Gospel, and so hearing as to live—love which would not let him rest by day or night until these doors were reopened, and the walls resounded with the news of "God reconciling the world unto himself, and not imputing their sins." It was the love of Jesus burned in his breast, not suffering him to give sleep to his eyes, nor slumber to his eyelids, until he opened this house for the Lord, as a habitation for the mighty God of Jacob (Psalm cxxxii. 3). The country will be better, and the building better, and,

Thirdly, *The tenure will be better*—eternal. Every thing here is mutable and transient ; this building is leasehold, this world is but leasehold, these bodies are leasehold. But the saints' last home is freehold, and, like the possessions of the Jews in their best days, unalienable. We cannot wear it out, nor live it out : it is exhaustless, imperishable, and incapable of deterioration. It waxes not old, but wears perpetual freshness on its face ; dressed in the vigour of perfection—everlasting heaven is its name.

Finally ; the death of a dear friend has led us to consider *what are a saint's prospects in view of a change of worlds, and his gains in leaving this*. Have we "stirred up your pure minds by way of remembrance?" Are you coveting earnestly that rest which re-

maineth for the people of God? What I say unto you I say unto myself: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." Keep near to Christ in creed and conduct. Live the Christian, that when Christ, who is your life, shall appear, ye also may appear with him in glory, and join the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven, and whose employment is singing, "To Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, be glory for ever and ever. Amen." Our brother Hancox had a sweet voice; but O, could we hear it now, the tones are so improved that we should exclaim, "What hath God wrought!" and long to quit this house of clay to give our powers wholly to these things. Be thankful that "*we know* that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Cherish this knowledge, nor becloud it by sin, but holding fast that which you have, reach to that which is before; that faith may cheer your souls whilst in this tabernacle, and give you an abundant entrance at death to your glorious final home—your state of perpetuity—your building of God—the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen"

THE CLAIMS OF IRELAND.

REV. W. H. COOPER,

HOXTON ACADEMY CHAPEL, AUGUST 14, 1836 •.

"He shall reign."—LUKE, i. 33.

"He must reign."—1 CORINTHIANS, xv. 25.

THE difference between these two statements is merely verbal, but even in verbal differences there is sometimes a significancy. We have the assertion of the reign of Christ in the former of these passages given us as a simple, though a sure and certain, intimation of prophecy. We have it again in the latter of these passages, as usual with the apostle Paul, in the still more energetic language of positive declaration, that, in spite of all the hinderances that might take place, the event would be accomplished, and that, by an irresistible necessity, the Redeemer would attain his ultimate and universal power. The Lord Jesus Christ is the great subject of the scriptures from their commencement to their close. He, in his various offices, and the predictions made concerning him, has ever constituted the centre point of attraction to the mind of the people of God. Before he came in the flesh they were directed to the fact of his coming as that which was to be overruled for the consolation of Israel, the event that was to be the salvation of the people of God. And while we are still called upon to remember his first coming as the great event that is to prepare us for his second; to us his second coming constitutes the object of attraction and of interest to which our minds are continually directed forward in the inspired pages.

But when we say that Christ is every thing in the Bible, we say not all of our Lord and Master that we are warranted to say. However Satan may imagine that he has obliterated from this world every impress of the Saviour's image in the way he has inundated it with sin and crime, Christ is still every thing in the world: *for* Christ, as well as *by* him, that world was created; and when by the master-stroke of the policy of hell, Satan had imagined that he

* For the London Hibernian Society.

had wrested this world from the authority of its Great Owner and Lord, he found to his confusion that he had only constituted it a more conspicuous theatre on which the glory of that Lord was to be exhibited in triumph over all the wiles and the artifices by which satanic malignity thought to hinder or destroy it. The world exists for Jesus ; and when his last triumphs are completed, and his last trophies won, the trumpet of his waiting angel is to sound at his mandate the blast of dissolution, and the comely fabric is to crumble into ruin. It was but the scaffolding for the building to his praise, which is to last throughout eternity : it was but the theatre on which he was to exhibit his triumphs over the powers of darkness. It shall last till he reigns with his foot upon the neck of the last enemy that he shall conquer ; and when that triumph is achieved, “ then cometh the end.”

We have not separated the words of the text and insulated them from the connexion in which they are to be found, with any idea of concealing from your view those connexions, or of passing them by unnoticed in the progress of the evening’s discourse. We have wished simply to fill your minds, in the first instance, on the annunciation which these words give of the promised reign of the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, of which they so positively and distinctly assure us. We may not only read those words, but many others of similar import, from the inspired volume, as corroborating our views as to this subject, and with definite reference to Ireland. “ He shall reign,” says the evangelist Luke in the verse from which part of the text is taken—“ He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end.” In the preceding verse—to trace the connexion back a little—he says, “ His name shall be called JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest : and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of his father David ; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever :” or as the apostle Paul expresses it—“ He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet.” We say, the simple announcement of these words in the various points of view in which that simple announcement is presented, we desire to fix your minds upon : and as the object of this evening’s appeal is particularly Ireland, we fix your minds on the wide and general subject which these words present, with a special bearing of the subject, and reference of it throughout, to the circumstances of Ireland, and the prospects of those who labour there.

Dear friends, we have difficulties to contend with, even those of us

who labour in the most highly favoured parts of the land, of which you know comparatively little in your more favoured circumstances and multiplied means of grace. While you assemble in listening multitudes in the house of prayer—while you sit under your own vine and fig-tree, none daring to make you afraid—while you raise your song of praise in your highways and in your fields, and lift up a testimony to the truth as it is in Jesus in your highways and streets without molestation ; you know not what it is to breathe the atmosphere of a land where popery reigns in its power—where it stifles the liberty which religion is calculated to impart—where religion is one of the most dangerous and stirring topics that you can attempt to dwell upon ; where it seems almost impossible to disentangle it from the meshes of politics with which it is entwined and twisted, and where, to attempt such open proceedings in the advocacy of religion as you are familiar with *here*, would be deemed an insult to the profession of the millions around us, an act of outrage and persecution against the religion they profess, and which would be considered an act of political aggression. You know not the chilling difficulties that in various ways—which, lest I occupy too much of your time, I must not dwell upon—lie in the course, which prevent and fetter the efforts, which often dissappoint the hopes, of the labourer for Christ who is engaged in prosecuting the interests of God's kingdom there. But let the difficulties be such as they may, we look not on the obstacles, we do not calculate the chances and probabilities of success according to human modes of computation ; we read the record, "*He shall reign*"—"He *must* reign," and we ask no more, but desire to go boldly forward.

Let us consider, then, this promise, in order to understand it fully, under the divine blessing ; and O that while we do so, we may be able to understand it by the actual experience of the reign of our Lord Jesus Christ being established in our hearts !

View the kingdom which is here promised to the Saviour, the reign it is predicted he shall exercise, in the first place in its CHARACTER. And here we do candidly assure you that in the anticipations which we form, we desire not to give way to visionary and carnal views. We anticipate not a kingdom which shall be carried forward from some earthly palace, or the sway of some earthly sceptre where the centre of that kingdom may be fixed. We dream not of a monarch who shall array himself in robes of human state, and deck himself with a majesty that shall be sur-

rounded by either Jewish or Gentile courtiers, or reign in the peculiar manifestation of his presence in one more highly-favoured spot of earth than another. We expect not the coming down of that Saviour whom the heavens must retain till the time of the restitution of all things which have been foretold in the Word of God. We expect not the personal coming of that Saviour in order to avenge his people on earth. But what we understand—and we imagine we have the authority of Scripture for our views on the subject—and what we expect from the predictions of the Word of God is, the prevalence of spiritual and holy principles; the prevalence of intelligence directed by the light of the Word of God; and the prevalence of the peace and happiness which will be the natural result of the presence of such principles as these.

In anticipating the reign of Christ we anticipate a *spiritual* reign. We remember he has said, “My kingdom is not of this world.” We expect not that Christ shall robe himself in the garments of human splendour, that he shall invest himself with the trappings of human dignity, that it shall be distinguished by the accumulation of human wealth, or that it shall sway the sceptre or the sword of human power. We expect it will shine forth in the beautiful simplicity and glory of its Lord and Master; that in the energies of its truths, and in the exercise of its influences over the hearts, it will every where and gloriously prevail. We expect a *holy* reign, a kingdom of *piety*, a period in which the principles of *true holiness*, as they are revealed in the Word of God, shall be every where made known, and every where established with a divine and spiritual authority; when hearts which have been once impure shall be brought to bow to the authority of the pure and holy commands of the Word of God; and when the precepts of that Word shall be the standard to which every individual shall seek a marked and growing conformity. We expect a reign of *intelligence*, a kingdom of *knowledge*, of the best kind of knowledge, of knowledge derived from the Word of God; of knowledge that will guide to the path which leads to eternal happiness; of knowledge that will bring the soul savingly acquainted with the only Saviour, and fix it on a foundation which can never be moved. We expect a *peaceful* kingdom, because we anticipate the reign of Him who is the Prince of Peace; a kingdom when, under the influence of true religion, nations shall learn the art of war no more; when they shall beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; and when, reconciled to God by the blood of the everlasting covenant, by

the same reconciling blood they shall be made brethren for ever more. Nor are these prospects visionary ; though the scene that, in few words, we have thus endeavoured to bring before you is one so different from what the earth exhibits at present to the view, that, if we had not the best authority for it, you might treat it as visionary. This is the description that is given of the full establishment of the reign of Jesus in the Word of God ; and this is what is intended to be conveyed when it is declared in the visions of prophecy that “ he *shall* reign,” that “ he *must* reign.”

This is the kingdom, Christian friends, which we wish to see established ultimately and permanently in the sister island. We seek not the establishment of any religion by whatever name it may be called, under circumstances of human pomp, or by the exercise of human authority or power. We call not on you, as your forefathers once established popery in Ireland to establish the cause of true religion, the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ himself, who taught us that the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty, through God, to the casting down the strong-holds of sin and Satan. And we urge upon you the necessity for the establishment of this spiritual kingdom of Christ in Ireland, because she has too long seen anything but a spiritual kingdom there. In the various efforts that have been made to promote religion in that land, there has been too much of an unscriptural, too much of an absolutely secular, worldly, and unchristian character prevailing : and what the inhabitants of Ireland may be now considered as waiting for is, the establishment of a spiritual kingdom by spiritual and scriptural means. We seek for the establishment there of a kingdom of holiness. With the name of *Christian*, the religion which that land possesses, is not a religion of holiness. We refer you to its accredited books, and we tell you that in the pages of those books you will see recorded enough to show that it is an unholy religion. In the very attempts that are made to investigate the feelings of the human heart, and to direct the examination into the conscience, you find what is calculated to pollute, instead of what is calculated to instruct and inform. Nor should we require to turn to the pages of Dens’ Theology—though there is reason enough to fasten that document on the church of Rome—in order to show that in that church the interests of holiness were compromised, yea, and were sacrificed, to the interests and carnal welfare of designing men : we would only speak of the ordinary books of the devotion of that church, and particularly those that are designed for the use of the

priesthood : and from those accredited documents, without attempting to dive into the depths of depravity from which they derive their theological instructions, we should find enough to show you that though the church of Christ is a holy church and the kingdom of Christ a holy kingdom, the kingdom of holiness has yet to be established in Ireland. We wish the establishment of the reign of intelligence, and of knowledge, and of sanctified knowledge, in the sister island. For ignorance has been the mother of its devotion ; ignorance has sent its wretched children to their sacred mountains (as they have supposed them to be), and to their holy wells : and if you visit them on any of the occasions of resort to them, those that the voice of the public has not already put a stop to, and that still linger in some of the darker recesses of the island, you will see that the kingdom established by what is called *religion* in Ireland is a kingdom of ignorance, and not of knowledge, and sends the votaries of superstition to seek in the muddled waters of their sacred wells healing which those waters never could give to the body, and healing for the soul which is only to be found in the waters of life that are communicated to us in the Gospel. And though the priesthood, and many of the advocates of the church of Rome, tell you in England that we deceive you with stories on the subject, when we represent to you some of the gross superstitions of the country, we rejoice that, in the course of divine providence, the different modes by which travelling has been accelerated has enabled some of your intelligent and impartial countrymen to come among us and see things as they really exist. We rejoice at the testimony of an Inglis and others, who cannot be suspected of partiality in the matter, though the steps of the traveller are not necessarily directed to the worst scenes of superstition—that even he has recorded enough to show you that Ireland wants yet the religion of intelligence ; and that though her priesthood, and others who ought to know better, and to consult the interests of her perishing community better, do close from her the Sacred Volume, and tell her poor perishing children that it is not fit for the perusal of Irishmen—a lesson (blessed be God !) that they are obliged to begin to recal, and we hope ere long they will be compelled to revoke ; yet when you see that while they close this book against them, they shut up from them a day-light that would let such a blaze in upon their superstitious practices, that, had they but this Book of God, and would they read it carefully through, under the blessing of the Spirit of God, scarcely a peasant in the land but would disclaim

nis superstition. We plead for Ireland: and is it the religious part of her community alone that pleads? Do not the groans that even you hear rising from the various scenes of murder and outrage throughout the extent of that land, cry most piteously in the same way for a religion of peace? This she has not, this she never will have, till she has the pure and unadulterated Gospel: and send her what Lord Lieutenants you please, send her what political expedients you may, until you pervade her with the Gospel, she will never know peace. This is the character of the kingdom we wish to establish, of the kingdom we expect yet to exist in Ireland.

In the second place we call upon you to consider the reign of the Lord Jesus Christ in its EXTENT. The extent of this reign, as to its outward and visible extent, I mean, is set before us in various strong and remarkable expressions in the word of God. It is sometimes said that he shall reign, "from sea to sea, and from the river unto the end of the earth." We confine ourselves more particularly to the expressions that are used in immediate connexion with this evening's text: "He shall reign over the house of Jacob:" "He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet." These expressions are by no means different in their import from the class of expressions we have already cited, and spoken of, and which intimate that the Lord Jesus Christ is to reign over the whole extent of the world. "The house of Jacob," is a figurative term in the Old Testament prophecies for the church of the living God: and in the days to which the universal establishment of the reign of Christ refers us, the church of God is to be commensurate in its boundaries with the world on which you are now to look for it as but a speck existing on and struggling against it. Over this house of Jacob, having extended its boundaries thus widely, and including the then existing world within the limits of its communion, regenerated and sanctified by divine grace, the peaceful and peace-giving sceptre of the Saviour is to be extended.

In the other passage which we have brought forward from the epistle to the Corinthians, it is clearly intimated that he shall reign over all his enemies; and if there be left an exception in the declaration that "he shall reign over the house of Jacob," that exception is abundantly met in the declaration, that he shall reign over all his enemies. The world, as even at present existing, must be divided into two grand classes, in which are to be ranked the

friends and the enemies of God. To one or other of these classes all mankind are to be referred ; over both these classes the Saviour shall ultimately and gloriously reign. He shall reign “ over the house of Jacob ” with the powerful sceptre of his word : he shall reign “ over his enemies ” with a rod of iron ; and as a potter’s vessel shall he break them in pieces.

The result of the conversion of the one, and the overthrow of the other will be, the universal diffusion of true religion wide as the limits of the globe. We cannot enter into the calculation whether, in those days, every individual shall be savingly acquainted with the Lord Jesus Christ or not : but we may safely hazard the assertion, upon the authority of various testimonies of the word of God, that in those days religion shall so universally prevail in its purity and in its power, that the exception shall not be worth the noticing—they shall be so small in proportion to the general aggregate of prevailing good. We do expect the period when this world, rolling round, as it now does, apparently under the curse of its Maker, on account of the burden of crime and sin which rolls along with it, shall present a smiling aspect to the eye of the God that made it, and, as it rolls, being in every part of it vocal with its heartfelt praise. We anticipate the period when the shout of victory shall be heard, asserting that “ the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ ; ” when every nation, and tongue, and tribe, and people, shall worship and fall down before him.

I imagine there are few, at all familiarized with the Word of God, and particularly few, at all connected with the visions of prophecy, who would for a moment hesitate as to the truth of this conclusion. You, too, in particular, Christian friends, anticipate the coming of such a period as this : and often in your prayers you implore that the world may be covered with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the face of the mighty deep. Is IRELAND to be an exception to the extent of the Redeemer’s victories ? Is she to be left out of the boundaries of the Redeemer’s kingdom ? O ! the most prejudiced against her, the most hopeless about her, will surely not hazard such an assertion as this. And if Ireland is to be included in that extent, is a spot where more than seven millions of souls are yet to be won to the Redeemer unworthy to be looked at as you stand and form your calculations of those blessed schemes by which the world itself is to be subdued to Christ ? From the island that you are privileged to inhabit, from the white cliffs of your beloved Albion, you seem to stand in the spirit of Christianity, and, in some

sense, in the spirit of prophecy; and, anticipating the victories of the latter day, you already prepare to claim the world for your Redeemer. Distance seems lost in the anticipations and the efforts of the Christian. You stretch out the hand of benevolence, and it rests upon the head of the poor Hottentot in the southernmost wilds of Africa. You put out again the hand of your Christian benevolence, and it affectionately grasps the Hindoo as he roams in his errors in the plains of Hindoostan. You stretch out again the hand of your benevolence, and it strikes the fetters from the arms and the limbs of the West India slave. The world, Christian, you are already feeling it to be your privilege to occupy for Christ; and we ask you, Is *Ireland* the only spot of it where it is not to be his destiny to reign, or that you are to omit in your calculations? Surely when you go to the Hottentot or to the Hindoo, or when they come to visit you, and find that there are seven millions of your fellow-countrymen lying at your very shores without sufficient means having ever yet been adopted of bringing them to the knowledge of the Saviour, they will not see much consistency in the matter, and they will wonder at the benevolence that has laid hold of them, and forgotten the perishing nearer at home.

We call your attention, in the third place, to the kingdom of the Redeemer in its DURATION. With reference to that duration, the expressions used in the context by the evangelist, Luke, are strong and emphatic: "He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end." In the immediate connexion of the words, as they occur in the epistle of Paul, there seems to be some discrepancy from the statement made by the evangelist. "Then," says the apostle, "cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall put down all rule, and all authority and power. For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet." We reconcile these predictions by considering the expression "for ever," and the declaration that there shall be "no end" of the kingdom of Christ, as referring to the boundaries of the existence of this world, and intimating that the existence of the kingdom of Christ shall continue to the end of time. There shall be no further dispensation, no change of dispensation, no substitute for the Christian dispensation, no giving up the kingdom of Christ to another, or doing away with that order of things which has set in since the first promulgation of the Gospel
Him and his apostles. That Gospel shall make growing progress,

shall obtain growing influence, shall work growing wonders, and accomplish, under the blessing of the Spirit of God, extraordinary and many changes. But it shall be the same instrumentality, the same principle, the same pervading power, the same dispensation in all its characteristic features still. There shall be no end to it, as there was of the Jewish; and instead of waning away, as the Jewish dispensation did, it shall be for ever.

Nor shall this mediatorial kingdom of our Lord and Saviour be resigned till the last enemy of it is conquered. We look around us, and we behold many enemies still existing to the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ; and though we venture not to state precisely the years during which the establishment of his kingdom is to be delayed, and that shall roll away before the last of these enemies falls, yet we stand prepared to watch the downfall of one and of another, and to calculate as each retires before the King of kings and the Lord of lords, that the time is coming when he shall reign over all. We know that antichrist shall give way before the breath of his mouth, and the brightness of his coming: we know that after antichrist, the last enemy that shall then be destroyed is *death*; and that having asserted the glories of his reign, and the wonders of the grace of the Gospel, in his victories over antichrist, and having reigned over the world in the powers of the principles of the Gospel, by the bringing in of the morning of eternity, and by the blessings of the glorious and happy resurrection, he shall triumph over death, and, one with the Father and the Spirit, reign for ever in the world above.

It is in the issue of this mediatorial reign of our Lord Jesus Christ; it is in the eternity of bliss in heaven with which his kingdom on earth stands connected as its result; it is in the destruction of death, and every thing that is known and called by the name, that we expect to reveal the fulness of the promise in the predicted duration of the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. And that kingdom shall no longer be administered as it is at present: though we shall not then be called to preach at the footstool of the majesty of heaven in prayer in the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, because there will be no necessity for prayer; and though the Holy Spirit, as a distinct agent, will no longer manage a separate part of the affairs of that kingdom; though the Mediator, as Mediator, will give up the sceptre of his vice-regency (if I may use the term); and though the Spirit of God will resign the distinct administration which he has been carrying forward under the

Gospel dispensation; one in the recognition of his people, one in the understanding of his nature in a way in which we never could have fathomed the mysteries of that nature whilst here below, we shall recognize the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, as reigning unitedly God over all blessed for ever.

In the very terms in which the duration of that kingdom is expressed, we see again a circumstance that calls our mind to the circumstances of the sister land. You anticipate the reign of the Saviour, and you speak of its enduring till his enemies are put under his feet. *There* reigns one of Christ's greatest enemies, marked in revelation by the name of antichrist, which must be destroyed root and branch before the kingdom of our Redeemer can be established. In giving the designation of *antichrist* to the superstition that reigns in Ireland, we make no apology for so doing: it is the name that God has branded on the brow of Popery, and it is the name that Popery must wear until, by the power and the grace of God, the antichristian system is destroyed. In using the term, however, we mean no enmity or anger to the votaries of that system: and would that, in speaking of it in the language which scripture warrants us to employ, they would ever feel that we do so simply because scripture uses that language, and we must call things by the names that God gives to them, that it is without a feeling of anger against them, but, on the contrary, pity for them, that under the name of Christians, they should embrace a system that is so contrary to Christ.

But we are speaking to Protestants; we are speaking to Protestants whom we presume to be acquainted with the scriptures. They, in the labours of our early reformers, have been taught that this system is emphatically so called; and if they will be at the trouble of studying the language of the scriptures on the subject, they will find the description to be accurate. Now, shall the grand enemy continue? Shall the enemy that bears such a name as this reign there with infinitely greater power than he does in France, with greater power by far than he does in Italy; and in some degree, with greater than even in Portugal or Spain? Shall antichrist continue to reign and to triumph in Ireland? English Christians! if you leave it unmolested and undestroyed, you are willingly neglecting that which is essential to the universality of the Redeemer's kingdom. That which the Redeemer speaks of in such strong language must not be overlooked; and if you wish to proceed with energy in your foreign missions, and to attack tri-

unphantly other foes of the Redeemer, this enemy to the souls of the children of men, existing under the shadow of your wing, and through your neglect of the spiritual efforts by which it might have been overturned long ago, must be put under our Redeemer's feet.

The fourth circumstance to which we would direct your attention relative to the Redeemer's kingdom, is its CERTAINTY. You have already, perhaps, anticipated us in this idea from the very annunciation of the language of this evening's text. Ah! friends, we may be disappointed in our looking to England for aid; we may cry in vain to you, in the midst of your religious privileges, "Come over and help us." Year after year may pass away, and no British minister may visit our shore, in order to explore for himself and to report to his Christian countrymen the darkness and the superstition of Ireland. Year after year may pass away, and no student in your numerous seminaries for training up young men for the work of the ministry, may say to the privileges of Great Britain and the communion of British churches, "I leave you in hands that will not be neglected: Ireland! with thy poverty and thy discouragements, I will take thee as my lot." Years may pass away, and though we urge you that, when you are resolving this year and another to send out fifty missionaries to the heathen, you ought at length to come to the determination that you will not fling on the barren surface of poor Ireland a few scattered drops which only raise her dust, and proclaim her barrenness; but that you will turn upon her the streams of salvation in their fulness and in their richness, till, under the Divine blessing, you have irrigated the whole. In vain we may plead, in vain we may cry, that any one year, by some noble effort of British bounty, fifty missionaries at once will be planted among the seven millions of Ireland. But if we turn from you disappointed, and in answer to the claims of the sister land you stir not in those works which her necessities and ignorance require; we trust in the living God: we know that "he *shall* reign"—that "he *must* reign;" and in sure and certain dependence upon the promises given to us, we desire to go forward. We are not calculating any mere chance as the result of the warfare in which we are engaged: we are not looking to any contingencies that may hang over the result of the battle, and that may yet await the issue of the fight. Though the few labourers that there are may drop at their posts, and there should seem none ready to supply their places in the field of battle, we know that God, from the very

stones of Ireland (to use parabolical language), can raise up labourers, if *you* send them not into the vineyard.

In the language which I have employed, let none think that I am merely using declamation, and making an appeal from your feelings, for the sake of effect: I am using the language of bitter and serious fact. For several years back we have waited in vain to receive the visitor that I have spoken of, from our brethren in the ministry in this highly favoured land. We would simply ask as one thing, that you would raise up among yourselves a society, to send some of your most eminent ministers to do good by a short sojourn (say six weeks) in traversing some parts which we may direct them to in the sister island. We have waited during the time that I have spoken of, and in vain, for such visits as these. In reference to our congregational visit from this land, I said from another pulpit where I had an opportunity of stating its claims, that while America, distant America, was greeted, the secretaries of our union had not time to sit down to write even a note of greeting to Ireland. I repeat the assertion—not to blame the men (for I know and love them), but to show you, friends, that you are too much in the habit in this country, that it is left out of your prayers, left out of your correspondence, and left out of your greeting. Last year our Scottish brethren sent over one whose addresses enlivened and encouraged our hearts, as he told us of the former weakness of the cause in *Scotland*, and of the way in which it had gained strength, and gone forward mightily up to the period at which he was addressing us. But we had no visitor from *England*: we had not a single minister, though invited, to cheer our hearts from that which is the native land of some of us; men who came, when our brethren were gathered, *from the back of the world*, as they emphatically expressed it; from the remotest corners in Ireland, in order that they might be cheered and animated by their kind and salutary favour. I mention it, and I do it thus publicly, that such may never be the case again. O dear friends, stir up one another to think of Ireland, and to visit, especially, by a deputation of those who may cheer us and do us good, the sister island; that they might come back, and tell on your platforms and in your pulpits, the wants they have seen, and the miseries which they wish you to relieve.

During the period that I have been adverting to, we have heard that your academies are overstocked with students, and that in your land ministers are treading on the heels of ministers; but though

these statements meet our eyes repeatedly, through your missionary and other publications, we have looked, and we have longed, and not one of this overplus, not a single overflowing of your bounty in this way, has ever found his solitary path to Ireland. Through years that I retrace at this moment, and from the period when the institution for the education of our young men was put a stop to, under the idea that the overflowings of your English seminaries would supply us—I repeat it, not one English student has ever come to settle in the land. During the last year death has removed two of our ministers, and their congregations are consequently vacant: circumstances have removed others: and after years of waiting, and some of toil, we have been able to turn out one solitary student as the fruit of our labours. Till the beginning of next year another cannot be suffered to depart from the institution; and, without speaking of new spheres of labour, there are at present four, if not five, vacant churches, where individuals, did your bounty supply the means, might be usefully occupied in Ireland. Under such discouragements from the land from which we do not expect them, it is a comfort to know that Christ *shall*, and that Christ *must reign*.

The last particular to which I would earnestly and affectionately request your regard is, the use of proper and necessary MEANS for the establishment of the kingdom of Christ. Without entering into a minute specification of the various instrumentalities that ought to be employed with reference to Ireland, we would just remind you of the sentiment we have just advanced in reference to the character of the kingdom we would wish to establish there, and we would say that the kingdom of Christ which we are desirous of establishing must be established in the use of means conformable to the character of that kingdom. It is therefore that, in adverting to those means, on the very threshold we disclaim every interference with every political instrumentality.

I have received this day from a friend of Ireland a letter, the writer of which seems anxious to be informed, amongst the conflicting statements which are made respecting Ireland, as to the actual condition of the country, and the means which must be employed for its spiritual renovation: and two names are classed together in this letter which I regret to see classed together, though I acknowledge that some circumstances may lead to, and seem to warrant, such a classification. I am asked whether the statements of the Rev. Mr. M'Ghee or those of Mr. O'Connell are to be believed on the

subject. I regret that a good and faithful minister, such as the former is—one who has at heart the interests of true religion, and would never knowingly stoop to any unworthy means for its promotion—should ever have committed himself, unthinkingly, by the production of a document which he did not sufficiently examine, when he had authentic documents enough to establish the point he was anxious to illustrate and to support. I regret that circumstances should, in the least degree, give a political character to the objects of an individual who, I am sure, has the spiritual welfare of Ireland at heart, however I may differ from him on some details as to the best mode of its promotion. I would say unhesitatingly, that the statements which that excellent minister of the Establishment has given, and continues to give, of the darkness and unholiness of the superstitions which he has been exposing, are statements which may be regarded as just and true, and however they may be contradicted never can be disproved.

As to the other individual who has been named, I have no business to express political feelings or sentiments, or to interfere with public or private character in any way in the pulpit. I would only say to any friend who may build on the authority of a name, that whatever justice may be attached to the name in question, surely a Roman Catholic is not the judge at whose tribunal popery is to be arraigned, if you expect the trial to be a fair one. Nor is it to the special pleading of one who has surrendered his own reason and judgment, in appearance, to the system in question, and to debase himself so far as to kneel in the muddy street before a bishop of the church to which he professes to belong; surely it is not to such an authority as this that you look for the true character of Ireland in a religious point of view. He may tell you of her politics; he may be an oracle about her “wrongs:” with his opinions upon that subject, one way or another, we have nothing to do; but as to her religion, take the evidence of the Book of God, and compare what that says with the religion that you find in the country, and out of its own mouth will it be condemned.

Though we may seem presuming in some of the language we employ on this occasion, we must candidly say, that we regret the admixture of political questions or feelings on the one side and on the other, with any of our religious societies, or with any interposition of British Christians feeling on her behalf. Be they Tory politics, or be they Whig politics, they have no business with the questions of Ireland’s welfare, if by religious means you wish to do

that country good. It is by means, as we have said, conformable to the character of the Gospel of Christ, that you must seek her evangelization; and our societies that allow the introduction of politics, unwisely, I conceive, on their platforms, give a testimony in favour of the necessity of this. Whether it is the instrumentality of the "Irish Evangelical Society" on the one hand, with politics their missionaries have nothing to do; and on the other, the "Hibernian Society" would as little like its schoolmasters to interfere with them in one way or the other. It must be by spiritual means by holy means, by intelligent means, by peaceable means, that Ireland is to be evangelized: the great mystery of her evangelization is, the full, the free, the diffusive application of the Gospel of Christ.

We might call, did your time permit, in review before you the various agencies which the Hibernian Auxiliary Society in this place of worship embraces, and as we pass each in review before you, we might test them as to their conformity to this character, and call on you to decide the question, whether the character of these means does not correspond with what we have said ought to be the character of the means used for evangelizing Ireland. Look at those peaceable scholars which the Hibernian Society has collected under the thatched roof of some lowly cabin by some bog side, and in some sequestered corner of the neighbouring island: and when you see the group of ragged children, learning in their native tongue to read the Book of God, surely you will say, ~~these~~ are likely men to do good to Ireland. Some of your travellers have returned from among us, and said, We never met with these schools. If it were our object to post them like the public houses and the inns upon the road side, for the purpose of attracting, they might wonder that they never met with them. But if travellers who study ease, and do not like to penetrate into sequestered valleys, or to travel by the side or even in the midst of bogs—if there be large tracts of country which they in their routes have never yet visited, it is not to be wondered at that those schools have seldom met their eye. They *do* exist, and they do good. They have already operated to the formation of friends among the peasantry in the West of Ireland, who now receive and welcome the scripture readers; so that when the scripture reader is particularly well treated in the house of any young couple, we may immediately come to the conclusion, which is soon confirmed by his statement, that such and **such** individuals were educated in the London Hibernian Schools.

I mention that society, not because there are not others, but because those schools your auxiliary particularly embraces. I ask you again, If we cannot induce our English or Scottish friends to settle in any numbers amongst us, may we not be allowed to choose from among ourselves young men of intelligence and piety, and to express the hope that you will feel for Ireland, and by her own children shall the land we love be evangelized at last, in instructing them in the Irish language, in enlisting their sympathies for their own countrymen, in their knowledge of the country over which they have to travel, and in their willingness to submit to privations which an Englishman would think it too great a hardship to submit to in that country. We may anticipate from a supply of native ministers what the experience of the past has demonstrated, that they are almost the only men who will stop with us ; and though we educate others in the country, it is only *Irishmen* whom we can prevail upon, generally speaking, to continue their labours among the people.

We ask you again whether scripture readers are not a means scriptural in its character, peaceable in its aspect, and calculated to do good in the land in which it is employed ? Could I bring before you on the present occasion some of these plain, but useful, individuals, you might almost be tempted to smile at the humble instrumentality. But what would provoke the smile of Englishmen is that which commends the poor scripture reader to his fellow-countrymen's heart. I could place before you, in the person of one of our readers, who has probably been more useful than many ministers have been—a mean, ragged-clothed, almost peasant, from the province of Connaught, between whom and the reapers who visit your shores you would see but little distinction as to attire or personal appearance ; but then he is not afraid of soiling his clothes as he goes from cabin to cabin among the poor inhabitants of the land that he traverses. When he sits down on their little stools, and takes in his hand the potatoe, and eats it with the butter-milk, or it may be only the salt, which is all the fare to which they can welcome him, and to which they do heartily welcome him in many of the cabins which he visits ; where he is provided with such fare as this, he is not a man to feel inconvenienced by it, much less a man to treat with contempt the fare on which human beings subsist with satisfaction. From his conformity to the prejudices of the country, to the customs of the country, and to the poor circumstances of the people, his willingness to come among them as one of themselves, and to talk with them on a footing of perfect equality, the

scripture reader has been allowed to lift the latch where another stranger would not be permitted to enter : the scripture reader has been allowed to speak with confidence where the minister would be heard, if listened to, with suspicion ; has been sometimes permitted to draw out his Book, *black* as it is (for such is the name which has been given to the Bible), black as it is, to the inhabitants of the cabin ; or, if awed by the authority of the priest, they tell him to put his book in his pocket, and that they cannot suffer him to read it, they will yet listen to him as he talks ; and when the Irish accents, in their sweetness and richness, flow from his tongue, the ear is chained to listen to the message of mercy ; and “ the story of peace,” as the Gospel is beautifully called in Irish, finds its way to many a poor sinner’s heart.

Besides this instrumentality, that of preachers of the Gospel stationed in districts, or of itinerant labourers traversing the length and breadth of the land, has been eminently useful. Did time permit, or were it the object of the present address to enter into details, I might present many which we receive almost daily, in illustration of the suitability of the means to the establishment of that kingdom with which I have been endeavouring to occupy your attention. We cannot *always* speak of success ; we must often speak of trials and disappointments : yet still this instrumentality in its varied character is finding its way, and already giving an indication that “ He *shall* reign,” and that “ He *must* reign,” whose right the kingdom is. Since coming among you on this occasion I have been urged from Ireland, by my fellow-labourers in the city of Dublin, to impress on the friends of that country here how much men and means are wanting for Ireland. We could find employment for many labourers if we could but receive from your liberality (and we are ready to throw in along with it our mite to support them), or could find the men who were willing to be employed in those labours. We have some of them already engaged in different parts of the country ; but what are these among so many ? I have been often challenged with what has been done for Ireland, and with the little degree of success which has attended it. All that has been done for Ireland ! Have you ever calculated all that Britain *has* done for Ireland at the utmost ; and then all that Britain *ought* to do, with respect to its duty to God and its duty to Ireland likewise ? And will you again repeat the question ? If you do, we can only candidly tell you that England never yet has done its duty to Ireland, and never will until she has sent an active and faithful missionary into every

large town, at all events (to say no more), of the sister island ; and if this was done with diligence and promptness, the effect is incalculable, and would be undoubtedly great.

But the success has been great : the revival of religion that has taken place in Ireland has been most satisfactory and glorious. You are not to calculate the good done by one denomination, but by various denominations of the people of God, and in the stirring up and rousing of Christians of all denominations in Ireland. The means already employed have been eminently useful and eminently blessed. There is every encouragement to go forward : we sin against the God who has blessed our efforts already if we do not ; and with all the discouragements and disadvantages, much land yet remains to be possessed. When we see the numbers that God has already brought to know the truth, and stirred up to usefulness in different denominations in the sister island, we see enough to lead us to thank God and take courage.

Will you bear with me (though yonder clock warns me to have done) whilst I venture to suggest to you that, while pleading with you for means, in connexion with the denominations which are united, though in no sectarian spirit, you are to remember that our episcopal friends have the wealth of government for their support ; you are to remember that our presbyterian friends have the *Regium Donum* for their support, in sums of from fifty to one hundred pounds for every minister settled in the land ; but that those who labour on the voluntary principle, and are the men on that account more particularly suited to meet the Roman Catholic on the principles he has lately adopted—they have no support but what they derive from British liberality. Is it too much, then, whilst you plead for the voluntary principle, that we call on you to give a noble demonstration of its efficacy under God to evangelize Ireland ? I take up Ireland with its millions ; I take up Ireland with its spiritual miseries and wants ; I plead with Christian brethren and sisters, and I say she is your neighbour, she is your sister, she has lived for centuries under your government ; you confess that you have wronged her : I plead for no political justice ; I simply ask, give her the Gospel, give it in proportion to her wants, in proportion to the abundance that you enjoy. I throw the cause upon your liberality ; and from what I have previously experienced when pleading the cause of Ireland, I am sure I throw it not on that liberality in vain.

But though I have trespassed, it may be the last time I shall be

permitted to address some of you—and before we part, therefore, the text has personal reference to you. In one way or other Christ “must reign” with respect to *you*. Have you ever felt the power of his grace in your hearts? Have you ever been converted by that Gospel which we wish you to send to the sister island? If not, that king shall reign; and the time will come when he will say, “Bring forth these mine enemies, and slay them before my face.” May none of you be found among the number of those enemies; but may each from the heart be enabled by divine grace to-night, not only by our use of the means, but by our yielding to the Gospel ourselves, to say, “Here in this heart he shall reign—he must reign.” God grant that he may reign for ever! **Amen.**

HEARERS JUDGED BY SERMONS.

REV. H. MELVILL, B.D.

CAMDEN CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, AUGUST 21, 1836.

"And if any man hear my words and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."—JOHN, xii. 47, 48.

THERE is one very striking point of difference between the divine and human administration of justice. With men it is a principle that punishment should follow rapidly upon crime, so that, if guilt have been proved, its penalty should be immediately exacted. But God, in his capacity of moral Governor of the universe defers punishment, so that the sin and its retribution are often separated by a long interval.

It might at first sight be thought, that our duty would have been to imitate as closely as possible the divine administration of justice, inasmuch as we must be confident, that the more we become like God the nearer we come to perfection. But on further consideration, it will appear that the difference to which we have referred is made unavoidable, by the difference between the divine nature and the human. God, as an omniscient and omnipotent Being, may keep an accurate account of what is done among his creatures, and may so restrain and overrule the wickedness of transgressors as to prevent forbearance from being injurious. But it is evident, that this cannot be said of earthly rulers. If they were to let crime go unvisited, intending at some future period to bring the culprit to account, they would have no power of ensuring that this their long-suffering might not do much injury to the community at large. They must either at once punish the offender, or leave him at liberty to go on injuring his fellow-men, without having any security of finally bringing him to account, or repairing the mischief he has been suffered to work. We do not see, even in regard of the divine administration of justice, that no apparent evil results from the present forbearance of the great moral Governor. We have the

testimony of the Bible itself, that this forbearance is wrested to an encouragement to sin. "Because," says the wise man, "the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." We can hardly doubt, that, if God's administration of justice were more nearly like our own, so that vengeance followed more quickly on sin, there would be far less on earth of that daring impiety which seems to assume that there will be no retribution and no punishment for sin. But then punishment is not the less sure because long deferred. God can make even evil subservient to good, so that the general happiness of his empire shall be promoted by crimes, his patience of which has been wrested into encouragement. These are manifestly assertions, which could not be advanced in regard of human rulers; and therefore we think it would be to frustrate all the ends of government, to attempt the imitation of the divine mode of administering justice.

But if we allow, that some evil, however it may be overruled, is produced by God's forbearance, we must be prepared to give reasons why the forbearance is exercised. And these are so obvious as scarcely to require to be stated. If vengeance followed immediately, or very quickly upon sin, there would be no room whatever for repentance, and God's dealings with our race would be reduced to a series of desolating judgments, with no season for contrition and amendment. And this state of things, though it might have been thoroughly consistent with justice, would have given no scope for other divine attributes, and therefore could not have been introduced with regard to a redeemed race. Law, strictly speaking, leaves no room for repentance, because repentance, however sincere, can make no amends for the violation of the statute; and therefore those who have law to administer cannot suspend its penalties, in hopes of a contrition, which, even if produced, will offer no satisfaction to the case that seeks satisfaction. But the case is altogether different with the Moral Governor of the universe in his dealings with mankind. God has not merely laws to administer, but provisions of grace to apply, even the rich provisions which have been made through the suretiship of a Mediator; and there is therefore a place for repentance, seeing that, if a sinner forsake his ways and turn to the Lord, he may obtain forgiveness, and nevertheless, through the satisfaction made by Christ, the law which he has violated will be maintained in its majesty and its dignity.

And yet, after all, the long-suffering of God is among the most

surprising of his properties, and should often be considered by us lest we presume on it to our injury. There is something wonderfully natural in that saying which St. Peter puts into the mouth of the mockers of the last days: "Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." We say, there is something very natural in this: it is just the language, which the long deferring of punishment is likely to draw from beings like ourselves. It is hard, it requires much faith, to realize the truth, that after long ages, during which there has been no interruption of one fixed order of things, there would be a complete breaking up of the existing system, and that God, who, century after century, has abstained from any visible interference with the world and its concerns, will suddenly come forth, assume the sovereignty, and deal out retribution. But we are to bear in mind what the apostle adduces in answer to the scoffers: "Be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." The Almighty computes not by our measures, whether of space or of time. Inhabiting eternity, as well as filling immensity, all things are present to him which seem to us indefinitely removed; and what *we* count delay can argue no change in the purposes of a Being whose existence is one unbroken now, without a past and without a future.

But however convinced we may be theoretically, that God's long-suffering is no evidence that he will not ultimately take vengeance, we require continual caution, that we may not practically presume on his patience, and be encouraged to sin by his abstaining from punishment. And such caution and watchfulness are best kept in exercise, by endeavouring to connect, as it were, our two states of being. For if we come to regard time as but a segment of eternity, we shall come to view all that is here, as designed for exhibition hereafter, and free ourselves, by God's help, from that habit of separating actions from their consequences, which is among the most fruitful sources of all sin.

Now, it is a very striking instance, which is given in our text, of this future repairing of what occurs on earth; and we are anxious to gain for it our closest attention, because persuaded of the practical importance of bringing you to place yourselves amidst the scenes of the last judgment, surrounded with all your actions, fresh as though just wrought, and with all your privileges ready to bear witness, whether for you, or against you. We speak

of the practical importance of leading you to do this, because this is what we have called your closely connecting your two states of being, and because we cannot but feel sure that any, who accustom themselves to the overleaping the interval that separates them from this world, and trying their conduct by the aspect it will wear at the tribunal of God, will be in little danger of abusing the divine patience, or of using it for aught else than as a motive to holiness.

You observe that Christ, in this passage, disclaims the office of a Judge, declaring that he came "not to judge the world, but to save the world." We know that the Redeemer is the ordained judge of human kind, and that by no other will the sentences be passed which are to fix the doom of every individual of our race. But this was a part of his mediatorial office, on which he was not to enter on his first appearing; his second advent is to be the advent of the Judge; and, therefore, while he was yet in humiliation, yet engaged in exhausting the curse which our disobedience had provoked, he might justly speak of it, as not belonging to his office, to pronounce on the condition of any of his hearers. The time for judgment was not yet come. He would persevere in his errand of mercy: and if any who heard his word should obstinately refuse to believe, he would not take upon himself to arraign and condemn; he would leave them in the hand of God, who had appointed a day when all should be tried, and sentenced according to their works. But then it was not to be supposed, that because Jesus had come, not to judge the world, but to save it, his ministrations upon earth had no connexion with the great assize to be held upon men. Though he had not assumed the office of judge, he was preparing what may be called the *materials* of judgment: "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." As though he had said, "It is my present business to deliver the communications with which I have been entrusted by my Father, to preach the Gospel, and to call sinners to repentance. I may meet with scorn and unbelief; my message may be rejected, my authority denied: but I do not proceed to pass formal sentence upon those, who, by thus treating me, place themselves in vast peril: enough that I have preached to them the words of everlasting life; those words cannot perish; they may now be despised, but shall hereafter be repeated before men and angels, and those who rejected me, will need no other judge, no other accuser."

You see that Christ thus brings into close association our two states of being, representing what men have heard on earth, as following them into the invisible world, and there giving testimony from which there is no appeal. And we suppose this to be only the particular case to a general truth ; so that the whole business of life will be, so to speak, transacted again at the judgment, and men's portion be decided according to the cautions and advantages which shall then be remembered. This is the idea that we wish kept uppermost in your minds, in order to guard you against abusing the divine patience. It may be long, according to the arrangements of the Almighty, before an action receives its due recompence ; but the action, though perhaps forgotten by ourselves, will re-appear hereafter, re-appear in the freshness of a crime newly wrought, and ask and find the severities of immediate retribution.

We leave, however, these general considerations, and limit ourselves to the examination of Christ's assertion in our text. We have here the preached Gospel set before us under a most important point of view, as actually the judge by which those who reject it shall be condemned at the last. We know of no sufficient reason for the supposing that Christ spoke exclusively of his own preaching, as though the like might not be affirmed wherever the Gospel is faithfully published, and wilfully rejected. We are not forgetful that there must have been an especial privilege in the hearing the tidings of redemption from the lips of the Redeemer himself ; and we admit the possibility, that those who shut their hearts against truth, when delivered by Him who spake as never man spake, incurred a worse responsibility than others who were taught only through the instrumentality of their fellow-men. But if the same word be preached in the name and by the authority of Christ, its future power of acting as a judge cannot have been destroyed, inasmuch as this power must have been at least mainly derived from the nature of the word, and therefore, that being the same, must still be possessed, notwithstanding the vast change in the dignity of the minister. Yes, whatever the weakness, whatever the faults of the agent, in so far as he is faithful in preaching the Gospel, he may take up the words of his divine Master, and boldly declare of every one who puts contempt upon his message, "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."

Now there are a great many truths, which force themselves upon our attention the moment we admit this judgment-power in the Gospel. We will endeavour to select those which seem to us the

more simple and practical, and to set them before you with fidelity and with earnestness.

We first observe to you, that there must be a power in every man of receiving the Gospel, and submitting to its directions; otherwise this Gospel could never be his judge, and condemn him on the very ground of its own rejection. This is one of those truths which we would take every opportunity of exhibiting and enforcing; it always appears to us to lie at the very root of the Christian system, that enough is done for every man, unto whom the Gospel is preached, to prove the justice of his condemnation, if he fail of being saved. He must be altogether the author and the cause of his own destruction, if he perish in unbelief, after pardon has been offered him through the mediation of Christ. It is not that he was not elected of God, or because there were not granted to him the influences of the Spirit. It is easy and common to take refuge in the mysteries of religion, when men desire to shake off some blame from themselves: but if Christ spoke truth when he uttered the text, there is no excuse to be found for any that perish in the inscrutable secrets of God's predestination. That which is to rise up in the judgment, and condemn those who have rejected the Gospel—condemn them though there was no other witness and no other accuser—is the Gospel itself; the word which has been heard, the word which has been despised. And we are certain from this, that there can lie no obstacles in the way of the believing and obeying the Gospel, but such as men themselves place; for the Gospel could not condemn because it had been rejected, unless it were undeniable that it might have been received.

You will ask how this can be, for you know that there is no power in man of converting himself, of effecting that great moral regeneration, without which he cannot see the kingdom of God. We reply, that the preaching of the Gospel is the ordained means by which God is pleased to act on a world lying in wickedness, but that the energy is not to be sought in the mere utterance of the word, but in the working of the Holy Ghost, by which the word is made effectual. It is not merely because the Gospel has been faithfully published in a man's hearing, that he will be without excuse at the judgment; it is because the Gospel thus published is the engine with which the Holy Spirit acts; and where this agent acts, there can be no excuse for unbelief. And does the Holy Spirit work upon every man who is brought within the sound

of the Gospel? We cannot doubt it: our text, if it were not supported by other passages of scripture, would of itself be sufficient to establish this point. We are assembled in this place, in obedience to the express commands of God, who has directed that one day in seven should be set apart for his service; that there should be gatherings of the people to hear the word from his ministers; and there may appear to be nothing but just the energy of a solitary man, who is debating and reasoning with his fellow creatures, and striving to excite their attention to certain truths which he counts of great moment. But this is the appearance to those only who look on the surface of things, and who are not accustomed to refer to the Bible as the ground-work of their opinions. The truth is, that a promise of the Redeemer must now be having accomplishment: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." We are gathered together in his name, and therefore must Christ be present with us; present specially by his Spirit, who descended to earth to supply his place to the church, when he himself had returned to the Father. And this Spirit is not present as an idle spectator of what may pass in this, our scene of solemn assembly; this Spirit is present in his office of a reprover and comforter, to convince of sin, to produce contrition of heart, and to pour into the wounded soul the oil of wine and consolation. This Spirit is present to operate by and through the word which shall be preached, and to make that word energetic, to the casting down the strong holds of Satan, and erecting in their stead the kingdom of Christ. Who is there amongst you whom this Spirit neglects, and on whose behalf he is not striving to turn into everlasting benefit the services of the Sabbath? We do not believe there is one of whom this can be said. There may be many of you whose thoughts are wandering over the earth, but they are answerable for their not endeavouring to fix their attention on the business in which they are professedly engaged. Let them call home their thoughts, and cease to mock God by their indifference, ere they venture to account for their remaining unconverted by declaring that the Spirit does not act upon their consciences. There may be others who, acknowledging the necessity of repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, are yet secretly resolved to defer to what they call "a more convenient season" the forsaking the world, and following after righteousness: and such are chargeable with resisting the convictions which this Spirit has already produced, and are therefore so grieving the Spirit

that he may not be expected to operate afresh on their hearts, till they yield as he presses upon them the peril of delay.

It is not, in these and similar cases, that the Spirit passes by an individual, and is not ready to perform his office, in applying the word, and making it effectual to salvation : it is only that the individual is in some way opposing the Spirit, refusing to be the subject of influences by which he might be *led*, though God will not suffer him to be *forced*, into acquaintance with the things that belong to his peace. And therefore it is that we are assured of the Gospel, even as it is preached by the weakest of Christ's ministers, that it will suffice to condemn all by whom it is rejected. The Spirit is present to apply that Gospel wheresoever there is not the indifference which makes the appearing in the church an absolute mockery of God, or the hard-heartedness which is the consequence of resisting convictions. The Gospel, as applied by the Spirit, is the power of God to salvation ; so that there is not one of you of whom it may not be demonstrated, that the preached word would have been effectual in turning you to righteousness, had he not himself deprived it of renovating energy.

What, then, will be needed, for the condemning in the judgment such as have heard, but have not believed, the Gospel ? What will be required, in order to the proving that the whole blame of their infidelity must rest upon themselves, that they perish through their own fault, because they perish notwithstanding the possession of full means of deliverance ? We reply that these, our solemn assemblages, will suffice. Yes, it shall not be necessary for the convicting at the judgment, as regards those who have remained unconverted under the preaching of the Gospel, that a laboured reckoning be entered into of privileges, and powers, and opportunities ; and that it be shewn, from the review of a long life, that enough was done, enough granted, to enable the impenitent to turn unto the Lord. A sermon will be sufficient, a sermon which set forth faithfully the truth as it is in Jesus. Let this be referred to ; let this be repeated, and all orders of intelligences will allow that the condemned have been their own destroyers : for the sermon, though it fell from human lips, was more than human reasoning or human declamation ; the sermon, though it may have been spoken in weakness, and though it may have seemed deficient in power and persuasiveness, has been delivered in conformity with an ordinance of God—the ordinance that men should be saved through “ the foolishness of preaching.” God's Spirit has been present, and

therefore must the sermon have been effectual ; effectual to salvation, had not the hearers steeled themselves against impression, and either by a carelessness which they might have corrected, or an obduracy which resulted only from their persisting in sinfulness, prevented the Gospel from being carried home to them, with energy from above. What, then, but the sermon will be necessary, to procure and justify condemnation ? And will you not admit, when you thus consider the Holy Ghost as continually at hand in the preached word, if not thwarted by obstacles which may be ascribed solely to the wilfulness of the hearers—will you not admit, that the minister of Christ might say, of any of those to whom he preaches in vain, “ The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day ? ”

Now the truths on which we have thus insisted, must be combined with every other, which has yet to be advanced. There is very little use, in setting forth the adaptation of the Gospel system to human necessities, and inferring from their adaptation the criminality of those by whom it is rejected, unless it be first shewn, that man has full power of receiving what he is condemned for neglecting. Every thing hangs upon this. There is no dispute that its gaining such a lodgment in the heart as shall render it effectual to salvation is dependent on its being handled by the Spirit of God ; and therefore, before we can fasten all the blame upon man, if he be not converted under the preaching of the Gospel we are clearly bound to shew, that it is man alone who prevents the Holy Ghost from applying to him the word. But this having been done, we may safely go on to speak of the nature of the Gospel, and to argue from this the condemning power of the Gospel. We wish you to consider a little what the truth is which Christ hath arrayed with the authority of a judge. We hardly know whether sufficient attention is given to the fact, that no message could be devised so likely as that of the Gospel, to act equally on the fears and on the hopes of human kind. We are so accustomed to the rejection of this Gospel, to its being listened to with coldness, or turned from with disdain, that we come almost to forget that it is marvellously adapted to the gaining of an audience, and that the probability would have seemed, before the trial had been made, that all by whom it had been heard would have closed thankfully with its proffers. It must be matter of wonder to higher orders of beings, that men can be indifferent or opposed to the Gospel ; for whatever the alienation of the heart from God, the messages of Christianity

so address themselves to the feelings, that it seems almost inexcusable that they should be ordinarily despised. And we suppose that it will be this adaptation or suitableness of the preached word to the condition and constitution of man, which shall render that word so righteous but inexorable a judge at the last. Let us observe, for example, how, according to the statement just made, the fears and the hopes of human kind are equally appealed to by the Gospel of Christ. We challenge any of those who are accustomed to give the rein to their imagination, in order that it may conjure up forms and phantoms of terror, to array before themselves sterner pictures of the future than are necessarily drawn by the preachers of the cross. We are not speaking of high-wrought descriptions, when a man may be pouring all the powers of his oratory on that fearful abode, where there is "weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth." We speak only of the simple, yet thrilling representation which is necessarily presented when the speaker leads his hearers to the scene of Christ's agony, and makes them spectators of the unutterable agony of Him who died the just for the unjust, that he might bring sinners to God. It is *here* that imagination is distanced; for the passion and death of God's own Son furnish forth such a representation of the divine hatred of sin, and the fearfulness of that wrath that shall overtake the disobedient, as we are unable to compass, far more to exceed. We might almost say that, if we are not capable of feeling, our fears must be stirred by the tidings of redemption; at least we may confidently declare, that if men can be easy in the continuing in sin, when they have heard how imputed transgression caused the sword to "awake against God's fellow," the preached word will bear such testimony to their having been attacked with what was fitted to alarm or to arouse, as must prove them inexcusable if they slumber on in indifference.

And then, if you regard men as beings capable of being acted on through their hopes as well as through their fears, what engine can you imagine of equal power with the Gospel? If the word were one of unmingled terror, setting forth nothing but the sternness of God's wrath against sin, it might be expected to paralyze rather than stir to energy; but when we bring you the offer of free pardon, when we tell you of the love of your Creator, a love which even rebellion was not able to alienate, but which, rather than sinners should be left to perish in their sins, moved God to the giving up his own Son to shame and death; when we speak to you of the "inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not

away," and assure you that it is reserved for you in heaven, a free gift to all "who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality;" surely we have stated what, on every calculation, is adapted to the exciting the hopes, and therefore engaging the activities, of a being so constituted as man.

We are not now to enter on the inquiry, how it comes to pass that what is thus selected for the acting, whether upon fear, or upon hope, should fail, for the most part, either to animate or alarm. We are only concerned with showing you, that it cannot be traced to any defect in the Gospel itself, to any want of suitability to the human constitution, that the preached word is not effectual to the turning men to God. And this we reckon sufficiently done, when we have proved to you, that there is every thing in the Gospel to make the impenitent tremble, every thing to fill the contrite with joy. This having been done, we can pass at once to the last judgment, and view preacher and hearer confronted at God's bar. The grand inquiry will be as to the sufficiency of the means which have been enjoyed. If it can be proved of any individual that he had salvation within reach, his blood must rest upon his own head, when there goes forth against him the sentence of condemnation. And will it not make indifference inexcusable, when it shall appear, that there had been delivered, in the name of the living God, a message calculated to fill with tremendous apprehension all those who are living without concern for the future? And shall there, think you, be any appeal, any question as to the justice of the dealing, when the worldly-minded are condemned to everlasting shame, when it has been shown of them that they had been offered glorious and enduring possessions, which threw into shade the brightest things which earth could allure? That the Gospel has been preached to a man—O this must be enough to leave that man without excuse. He cannot plead, that he knew not that sin was hateful to God; for he knew of Christ's death. He cannot plead that there was nothing to oppose the objects of sin in the claiming of his affections; for he knew that Christ had purchased a kingdom for his followers. He cannot plead, that he was left without encouragement to repentance; for he knew that Christ had reconciled the world unto God. And therefore he must be speechless. The remembrance of what he heard on earth will suffice to confound him. The preacher, on whose ministrations he attended, but to whose ministration he had given no heed, will bear such witness against him, that other testimony shall not be needed

to insure his condemnation. Yes, men and brethren, it may be painful to think, that the very being, who came to us with the offer of mercy, whose very business it was to intreat you in God's name to abandon the paths of iniquity, to dissuade you from earning to yourselves a heritage of wrath, and to urge you to the accepting the fulness of joy for evermore, that he must appear against you at the last, if you die in your sins, and call for the vengeance which he here laboured to avert. But this it will undoubtedly be ; for so marvellously fitted is the Gospel which he preached to alarm and to animate, to make you spurn the earthly and seek the heavenly, so powerfully does it address itself to the sensibilities, so exquisitely does it solicit the charities of your nature, that the treating it with neglect is the proving yourselves bent on the choosing death, and not life ; and the preacher must feel, of every one that turns a deaf ear to his message, " The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."

Now these remarks render it necessary to enter more into detail, to show, by closer examination of the several parts of the Gospel, that, where it has been faithfully published, it must leave its hearers without excuse, if they continue in unbelief. There is not a plea which a man can invent, not an apology which he can offer for remaining in the alienation of nature, in place of being numbered amongst the true disciples of Christ, whose worthlessness is not exposed by some sentence in the Bible. The word which we are commissioned to preach, sets itself as an antagonist against all those delusions by which men are beguiled, and which promise security without demanding instant change of conduct. If you take one of the delusions, and try it by the Bible, its falsehood is immediately made apparent ; so that we may be sure that any man who has heard the Gospel, and treated it with disdain, may be judged at last by that word, and prove his own destroyer. A man will often plead the corruption and frailty of nature : he did not make himself, and is he to be punished for yielding to passions with which he is created, and which are too strong now to be resisted ? " The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day ;" for the word is, "*My grace is sufficient for thee,*" and, "*God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able to bear.*" It is vain to plead the strength of temptation in excuse for being overcome, while superhuman help was offered, through which victory might have been secured. Another man will acknowledge that attention should be given to the

saving the soul, but he reckons on after opportunities, and screens his present neglect by the promise of future carefulness. "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." The word emphatically announces to him, that "*now is the accepted time, that now is the day of salvation.*" It offers man all he needs of to-day; it gives no pledge for to-morrow: therefore shall it take away all excuse from those who, through daring to procrastinate, have died without repentance. A third relies on the unbounded benevolence of God, arguing that a being so full of tender compassion will never be extreme in exacting punishment from his creatures. But "the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." That word hath expressly declared, "*The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.*" It hath stated, without reserve, and without equivocation, that "*God is righteous in taking vengeance;*" and that while he is *a reconciled Father* to all who seek him through Christ, he is *a consuming fire* to such as reject him and put contempt on his Gospel. And this word will judge the man who presumes on the divine mercy. It could not have been in ignorance that he thus presumed after having heard, and therefore will that Gospel take away all excuse, and leave him defenceless at the judgment.

It is thus with every instance of self-deceit, every species of apology, every subterfuge. We defy you to invent, to imagine the plea which a man might offer, why sentence of death should not be passed upon him hereafter, which will bear being brought to the test of the preached word. If you can suppose a man who heard the Gospel, but died without repentance, excusing himself at God's bar, you cannot devise the excuse which might not be instantly invalidated by a reference to that Gospel. We will dare to throw an awfulness over our present assembly by associating it most closely with the transactions of the last day. We will not allow that, because a few minutes hence you will be dispersing to your several homes, and the business of public worship will be suspended till another sabbath comes round—we will not allow that the services of this day, of this evening, are about to pass away for ever. We believe that the sermon which has done its part as *a proclamation*, has yet to do its part as *a witness*. What I now speak has again to be heard—heard on that day in wonder and in terror, when the dead, small and great, are to stand before God. And if there is one among you who has been a stranger to the Gospel, he will not go hence

with any excuse that will avail him on his trial. We tell this individual that he has sinned, and come short of the glory of God. We tell him that no penances, no morality, no benevolence, no uprightness, will suffice to gain his pardon, and save him from a worm that dieth not, and a fire that is not quenched. But we go on to tell him that God, in the exuberance of his love, hath provided a ransom, given his own Son to die in his stead; and that, by virtue of this marvellous substitution, he can and will pardon you, aye, crown with eternal felicity all who are ready to be free from the power, as well as the punishment of sin. And we entreat him that without a moment's delay he would devote himself to the seeking God through the Mediator Christ. We assure him that he cannot seek in sincerity, and fail to find; we assure him that he cannot refuse to seek, and fail to perish. A thousand promises of God bear us out in the one statement—a thousand threatenings in the other. And now our task is done. The man will depart; perhaps tomorrow he will be on the great deep; and he will soon forget in distant scenes what is pressed on his attention by the minister of Christ. But can our words perish? Is there no marble, no brass, on which they are graven, though they have not imprinted themselves on the heart of the hearer? They have not perished; it is impossible they should perish. *These very words* are to vindicate the righteousness of God, when, in the presence of the congregated universe, this rejecter of the Gospel receives his sentence for eternity. Let him stand forward. The charge against him is, that of living as a rebel, though there had been blood shed for his reconciliation: he has been told of his rebellion; he has been told of the blood shed for him. If he attempt to plead ignorance, there will arise before him this very sabbath-meeting; aye, and the words which I have just addressed to him will crowd on his memory, for there shall then be no forgetfulness, but every moment of time will return as though the past became the present, that it might give its canker to the future. And if ignorance cannot be pleaded, how will the promises and threatenings of God, to which he had been directed, spring forward, as accusers, and overwhelm him by their testimony!

It is but too possible that this present ministration will thus furnish evidence, condemning evidence, at the last assize: and though, if I could single out the individual whose case I have supposed, I would plead with him earnestly and affectionately, beseeching him again and again to hearken to the tidings of forgiveness, and arraying before him the awfulness of final retribution;

yet if I know him not till we meet before the great white throne, and he be then among those who shrink away from the face of the Lamb, O there is nothing which can prevent me from appearing as a witness against him when he is standing at the bar ; and “ the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him at the last day.”

We do not know, brethren in the Lord, that a more affecting truth can be presented to the minister of the Gospel, than that of his thus furnishing the evidence on which *some*, at least, amongst his hearers will be finally condemned. It must, I think, be one of the most painful of duties, (and all of you, I am persuaded, will agree with me in this), to come forward as a witness when a fellow-creature is put upon trial for his life, and to state facts which will ensure a fatal verdict. I am sure there is not one of us, whatever the wrong he had sustained, or the injury he had suffered, who could go unmoved into the court, and deliver, without a pang, testimony which must number the days of the prisoner. And what is this to the being witnesses against men who have never harmed you, men from whom you may have received many kindnesses, with whom you may have lived upon terms of friendship, and who are on a trial whose issue will decide whether they are to be inconceivably happy, or inconceivably wretched for ever and for ever ! It is vain to say, that the period will then be over during which human feeling can then have play, and that he who gives the evidence will give it without sorrow, because the possibility of grief must terminate with life. We are not sure of this. *We are* sure that when the judgment is concluded, and heaven entered, there will be place only for gladness and exultation : but we are not sure that, while the business of trial is still going on, and ministers see their congregations, and parents their families, divided and broken up, one taken and another left ; we are not sure that there will be nothing of agony, no burst and no gush of human sympathy. And why not sure ? So soon as in the mystic vision of St. John there had been the gathering of the dead from the sea and the land, and the sentencing of all men according to their works, there arose before the evangelist a new heaven and a new earth, the abode of the righteous. But what is among the first things then said in regard of the inhabitants of this magnificent creation ? “ God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” Is it not as though there will be weeping at the very instant of entering the eternal city, so that tears will be carried even into heaven itself ? O ! I

could almost believe from this that human feelings will have power throughout the awful transaction of severing the just from the unjust, and that those who have had to bear witness against others, and who have seen many, whose happiness they ardently wish, given over to the destroyer, will then know for the last time something of anguish of spirit—that they will go away to their own glorious heritage mourning for the lost, and that their gaze will be dimmed by the dew of human sympathy till God himself hath comforted them, and dried up their tears by manifesting his own splendours.

And *I* would not be a witness against any of *you*, and I would not that any of *you* should be a witness against *me*. In leaving you as I do this night, for a period of relaxation from public duty, I would earnestly pray that God of his mercy would pardon whatever has been faulty in my last year's ministrations, and bless whatever has been spoken according to his will; and thus cause, that, when we meet at the judgment, no words of mine may be produced to convict *me* of unfaithfulness, and none to condemn *you* of wilful impenitence. We must meet—meet in the relation of pastor and people; but, blessed be God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, let us be earnest in obeying the Gospel, and there is nothing to prevent our meeting with gladness, and go in, an undivided company, to the marriage-supper of the Lamb.

CHRIST MANIFESTED TO DESTROY THE WORKS OF THE DEVIL.

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WOBURN CHAPEL, TAVISTOCK-PLACE, AUGUST 28, 1836.

“For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.”—1 JOHN, iii. 8.

Not only may it be said of Jesus Christ that he came to destroy the works of the devil, but, with respect to the elect of God, to destroy the devil himself. I do not mean to say, to make an entire conclusion of him, but that he has taken from him all his power, and has moreover divested him of all authority and influence in reference to the church of God: so that, however he may tempt, annoy, and disturb them, he is incapable of destroying a single one of their souls. This you will find to be the case respecting them, by turning to what is said in Luke, x.: “The seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.” What a strong expression, beloved! But was that peculiar to the apostles? Was this power merely theirs, and not ours? We may use the same language in the exercise of faith upon Christ to-night as they did, and we may say, “Even the devils are subject to us through thy name:” for Paul says, “I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me:” and our Saviour moreover said, “I saw Satan as lightning fall from heaven;” a corresponding passage with my text—“He was manifested to destroy the works of the devil.” “Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject to you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven,” that you are the elect of God, which is a far greater subject of joy to true believers than having power over devils. This corresponds also with what is said in Revelations, xx. where Jesus Christ is said to have bound Satan “a thousand years,” (meaning the Gospel dispensation), “and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him

up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations," or the Lord's people scattered up and down the world—"no more."

My method of interpreting the passage for you this evening is, first, by advancing some things in reference to the illustrious personage mentioned in my text—the Son of God ; secondly, the powerful foe and his works which Christ came to destroy ; thirdly, the manifestation of Christ—giving you a diversified interpretation of the same ; fourthly, the end of the manifestation of Christ ; and lastly, I shall make a short application, or, rather I ought to say, pray that the Spirit of God may make an application of what I am about to say to your hearts.

First, I am to advance some things in reference to THE ILLUSTRIOUS PERSON mentioned in my text—the Son of God. And what shall I say of him ? Is it possible that a worm of the earth, such as the man who stands before you, shall say any thing adequate, worthy the consideration of any of you, in reference to this person ? All our ideas fail, and our language is inadequate to express the glory of that blessed Jesus who is the head, the representative, and the Saviour of his church. And yet it is necessary, in order to excite our hearts to love, that we say a few words in reference to him. If we had the knowledge of an angel, and the tongue of a seraph, we should be totally inadequate to express one thousandth part of the excellences of Him in whom we have salvation. If you ransack the whole kingdom of man, and collect in one aggregate the whole of the excellences of the human race that ever have, do, or shall exist, and place them to the account of one individual, together with all power, authority, dignity, and so on, such an amalgamation of excellences would not make up a single person any thing like Him to whom I call your attention. All the excellences of the inhabitants of the world, with their honours, dignities, immunities, and gifts, could not, if centred in the person of one man, make up such another as the illustrious person mentioned in my text.

I will give you one idea which the scripture affords, and that is, in respect of *his noble extraction*: he is called "the Son of the Eternal God." So excellent a person was this, that even Jehovah the Eternal Father brought himself into a state of poverty in order to enrich him. Hence it is said, he was "the brightness of the Father's glory, the express image of his person, and overcame all

things by the word of his power." I say, speaking after the manner of men, we are given to understand that the Eternal Father divested himself of all his excellences, placing them in the person of his Son: and that is the person who is said in my text to come and "destroy the works of the devil." "Although he was rich, yet for our own sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich." Hence he is the Son of God—the eternal, co-equal, everlasting Son of God.

Another remark I would make in reference to this great person is, that having all power to help and succour them who are in a state of degradation and death, *he*, as it were, *matches and marries our nature in order to accomplish his purposes*. God was manifest in the flesh; and as it was in the flesh that the church had sinned against the goodness and mercy of God, so it was in the person of the church that Jesus Christ fulfilled the divine law, and made perfect satisfaction to Almighty God: and thus he marries our nature and becomes a part of the body, he being the head, and we being the members.

In consequence of this, it appears from the holy Scriptures, that he succeeds in all his enterprises. Never did the Lord Jesus Christ take any thing in hand and was obliged to give it up for want of success: being perfect God and perfect man, he accomplished all that which he came to perform. He has rendered perfect satisfaction to Almighty God, and consequently has the crown of victory placed on his head, and that in reference to his body the church. So that Paul says, in Ephesians, iv. 8. "Wherefore he saith, When he ascended upon high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men."

He is incomparable, moreover, for wisdom, power, and courage. He is incomparable for *wisdom*, and knows all things in reference to time past and time to come, from eternity to eternity. Therefore he devised, in conjunction with the Eternal Father, a plan for the salvation of the church: infinite wisdom was requisite for the plan and the accomplishment thereof. And *omnipotence* was only just enough to accomplish that which Jesus Christ wrought out, and which was a part of that plan which originated in the mind of the Eternal God. Moreover he has all *courage* to do what his wisdom suggests; and courage that nothing could damp. Satan with all his power could not prevent him from the accomplishment of his design: and he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever never having undertaken a battle but what he won, never having

set himself to the accomplishment of any particular purpose but what he fulfilled the same, bringing glory to the triune God, and happiness to the church.

These are a few particulars in reference to Jesus Christ the Son of God, whose love led him to fulfil the divine law on behalf of his people, substituting himself in their place, and dying the death of the cross, entirely removing their sin, and wiping them out from the book of remembrance with his own blood, seated at the right hand of the Great Jehovah, interceding for his people and sending them day by day every necessary supply for the support of their hearts, the comfort of their minds, and the present and final salvation of their souls.

I call your attention, secondly, to THE POWERFUL FOE AND HIS WORKS WHICH JESUS CHRIST CAME TO DESTROY. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." I would give you a short history of the arch-enemy, and of the malignity, subtlety, ingenuity, and power, which he possesses, and which he is continually exercising against the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. I do this in order that you may see afresh what I have asserted under the first head of discourse.

The first remark I make in reference to Satan is, that we are told in Holy Scripture that *he was formerly an angel of light*, created perhaps during the first six days, and stationed among those blessed spirits who are continually before the throne of God. We are told in Holy Scripture that not being one of the elect angels he fell in to sin; and Jude tells us that "the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day."

Beloved, does not this for one moment remind you of that state of eminence from which *you* have fallen? Conceive, for one moment, Satan and all his crew, created as blessed, holy, and intelligent spirits, presenting themselves before the throne of the Eternal Father, together with cherubim, seraphim, and all the blessed spirits in heaven, all those who worship God, "the morning stars," as Job calls them, who "sung together" for joy when the world was created; conceive, I say, for one moment, Satan with all his adherents presenting themselves before the throne of the Father. Contrast their present with their past condition. They are

now shut up in everlasting chains and darkness, suffering under the punishment of an offended God, and although this is the case, determining never to give up their opposition to him who has shown them that he will have, and has had, and will continue to have a signal victory over them. And consider from what *you* have fallen. Our first parents were created in the image of God—holy, happy, pure beings. Adam disobeyed the commands of God, and involved himself and all his posterity in guilt; and now you see the whole human race gone astray, following the imaginations, desires, and passions of their own hearts, living the life of the devil on earth for the gratification of self, denying God and the Lord Jesus Christ, denying the Holy Scriptures, and every thing which tends to the promotion of their happiness. And consider, in addition to this, the issue of it all—that ere long, all who repent not, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, shall have their portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, together with him who is said to have been overcome by Jesus Christ.

Perhaps you are ready to ask, What was the cause of his fall? Why did not he who was such a bright intelligent spirit before the throne of God, continue in that state? Paul gives us to understand that it was *pride*, the most accursed sin of all. Hence, he says, in his epistle to Timothy, “Not a novice, lest being filled with *pride*, he fall into the *condemnation of the devil*.” It appears from this that we may draw an inference that pride was the cause of the condemnation of Satan. And, beloved, it is an accursed sin! How often it prompts us to much zeal in the cause of Christ, zeal without knowledge, and which is not good! How many a time it puts us on prayer, and study, and diligence, and the exercise of all our passions, for the purpose, if possible, by mechanical means of accomplishing what his Spirit alone can perform. The pride of our hearts would lead us out of the track of accomplishing the purposes of Almighty God, and would advance us to the throne of the great Jehovah. Pride is the cause of all this: it is Satan’s device, and has been the cause of the downfall of many individuals, states, and nations. Let us beware that pride is not the downfall of any of us. I do not mean to say that this, or any other sin, can destroy the Lord’s people; but it may be the means of bringing us into much distress and uneasiness of mind.

It appears again from Holy Scriptures, that being cast into hell, although he was incapable of dethroning the great Jehovah, *he found means of leading our first parents into sin*. Shall I give you

a description, for a moment, of the cunningness of this our spiritual enemy? Did he not come into the garden to our first parents, holding a conversation with them, saying, "I know God hath said that ye shall not eat of the fruit of the tree of the garden; but God doth know that ye shall not die, although he has declared this to be the case:" insinuating thus much; that God having created so beautiful a tree, and loaded it with such enticing fruit, they could not but suppose it was his intention they should eat it. "You shall not surely die, for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil:" presenting, as it were, to the minds of our first parents, temptation to the same sin which brought him to his own ruin. "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil;" whereas now you only know good, but hereafter you shall only know evil. The bait was enough; our first parents took it; they fell into sin, and brought on themselves and their unhappy posterity guilt, ruin, and damnation.

Thus is Satan most dangerous to us: and this will appear, first, from his being a *powerful* enemy. Peter says of him, that "as a roaring lion he goes about, seeking whom he may devour." Take this as an example of the enemy you have to contend with. Fancy any one of you walking in the streets of London at night, unarmed, unprotected, without a single individual in your company, to secure you from a lion that might have broken from the Zoological Gardens. He might have met you in one of the streets, and you know you would be totally incapable of grappling with the beast; he would soon overcome you, and destroy you; and it is a thousand to one if you were not destroyed on the very onset. This is just a representation of Satan, passing from street to street, from house to house, from church to church, from city to city, entering and presenting himself in every situation and circumstance of life as a roaring lion, for the purpose of destroying immortal souls: and nothing can secure him from you but the mighty power of the eternal God. Yet men seem satisfied with their present pleasures, careless of the salvation of their souls; and the consequence is that they are destroyed with an everlasting destruction, though they perceive it not till the moment they are brought into that place, where weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, will be their portion for ever.

Satan is powerful from his *ingenuity*. Hence he is called the *subtle* enemy of the children of God. Paul says, in 2 Cor. xi. 14,

he is “an angel of light.” Just consider the character of Satan, for one moment, as an “angel of light.” He presents himself to you as a child of God, in the shape of some hypocrite or other. Do you not remember what is said in Job, i. ? When the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, Satan came amongst them, and presented himself before the Lord, and, I understand from the passage, as a son of God. He was not discerned by the other individuals presenting themselves, but the eye of Jehovah could discover him. Hence he said, “Whence comest thou ?” Satan replied, “From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.” “Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil ?” And, like an angel of light, endeavouring to persuade God that there was not purity in the heart of Job, nor genuineness in his religion, and endeavouring to show to God himself, that he was moved to indignation against Job from just motives and right principles ; and he treated Job as a base hypocrite, and he said to God, “Hast thou not made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side ? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land : this is the substance of Job’s religion ; but put forth thy hand now, and touch all that he has, and he will curse thee to thy face.” Here he appeared as an angel of light, seemingly with a heart full of hatred to hypocrisy and self-righteousness.

Observe what is said in the prophet Zechariah respecting Joshua the high-priest. “And he shewed me Joshua the high-priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him.” What was the conversation which then occurred between God and Satan ? Satan came for the purpose of preventing the introduction of Joshua into heaven, because of his filthiness. It is said that “Joshua was clothed with filthy garments”—just as you and I, beloved, are clothed by nature ; we stand before God just as filthy as Joshua did. What was the expression that God used in reference to Satan ? He said, “The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan ; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem, rebuke thee : is not this a brand plucked out of the fire ?” Thou hast come here to prevent me receiving Joshua into heaven ; thou art endeavouring to persuade me that Joshua is not a fit object for eternal glory ; I will show you that he is : “Take away the filthy garments from him.” And he said to Joshua, “Behold, I have

caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment." And Satan was silenced. Is not this often the case? Does not Satan many a time endeavour to tempt you, by inducing you to believe you are not a child of God; by infusing into your mind exalted notions of the principles of purity, and endeavouring to persuade you to bring your experience to these principles; thereby endeavouring to condemn you in your own conscience, and bring you into a state of desperation; though he hates purity with all his heart? Does he not often say to some of you, "You are exceedingly good and praiseworthy in the sight of God: you prayed to God as soon as you left your couch; you have been in the spirit of prayer during the day, and have manifested yourself as a man of prayer even at the close of the day?" Do you not feel some kind of complacency in consequence of having attended to this duty, leading you from trusting in Jesus Christ to trust in something of your own? To another Satan says, "There is no doubt of your salvation because of the extensiveness of your knowledge: you comprehend the whole book of God; and inasmuch as it is said that some men perish from lack of knowledge, *you* shall be saved in consequence of your knowledge." Thus he tempts man to depend on himself, and to forsake the righteousness of Jesus Christ, being ignorant thereof. So in reference to regularity of life. Some men lead a regular, praiseworthy life in the sight of their fellow-creatures. Satan appears as an angel of light, and knows that the pride of the man's heart is ever delighted with self-gratification, he immediately suggests that the regularity of their lives is a sufficient passport to glory.

You are not to suppose (and I know many of you will agree with this sentiment) that Satan always tempts man with contraries. This is seldom the case: he endeavours to invent something as much like the words of God as he can; to present something like the Spirit's work as much as he can: he will try to bring forward something that shall have the appearance of religion, and so, in consequence, make men satisfied with the appearance instead of the substance. Take care lest Satan tempt any of you to fall into this sin, or to come short of salvation, through his subtlety. How necessary it is that we be on our guard lest Satan invent something like the work of God, and we be thereby led astray!

Moreover he is an *experienced* enemy. Do not imagine you have to deal with a person who has just commenced his opposition to the Gospel of Christ, or the salvation of men's souls: he has had

great experience ; and you cannot but suppose, therefore, that he is well qualified to act his part. And he is such a cunning contriver of all those things which seem to gratify men's carnal lusts, whether in the way of self-righteousness, or fleshly gratifications. He is well experienced in these things ; and what has passed leads him to succeed to a very considerable extent in what is present, and what is to come.

I would represent to you his *vigilance* also. He is always in his parish ; he never leaves his congregation ; he is ever employed in doing the most he can to damn men's souls : and he is much more diligēht in this work than we who profess to be the ministers of God. We stand up before you from time to time endeavouring to snatch your souls as brands from the burning ; but Satan is always employed, without the intermission of a single moment, endeavouring to draw away men's souls after lust, sin, sensuality, and self-righteousness, never for a moment ceasing his employment : with an inveterate hatred against God, he is doing all he can against the souls of men.

He is, moreover, a *persevering* enemy. He does not commence a work, and then give it up if he cannot succeed. He comes to the engagement with all his powers, bringing all his faculties into play ; every power he possesses is brought into exercise in this one great engagement to ruin the souls of men. Does he not shame many of us when we examine ourselves ? Is he not more diligently engaged and exercising greater power to ruin men than we are to save them ? You may take an example even from the devil. He is diligently employed, exercising all his powers in order to destroy ; and shall we not exercise our powers to save ? Shall we be deterred from " spending and being spent," as Paul says, in the service of Christ ? Shall we see men ruining their souls, and bringing on themselves swift destruction, and yet remain silent and inactive about it ? Impossible, beloved : if we have tasted that the Lord is gracious—if we know any thing of the mighty power of God in the salvation of our own souls, we cannot, we dare not, we will not, remain inactive spectators of men who are running the road to destruction, without attempting to snatch them from the ruin towards which they are rushing. Let us remember to use our power and ingenuity against the power and ingenuity of Satan.

He is a very *numerous* enemy : and although he is spoken of in the text in the singular number, there is a very remarkable passage where he is spoken of in the plural number : his name may be

called a *noun of multitude*; and I would that you would carry that name with you. When our Saviour was speaking to a man possessed with a devil, he asked him what was his name, and he said, "*Legion*, for we are many." A legion of devils in one man! You have to contend with a most numerous enemy, and are sure to be overcome, were it not for the exceeding greatness of the power of God as exhibited in Jesus Christ and applied to our hearts by the blessed Spirit. Hence the truth of my text: "The Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil:" and if he had not been manifested for this purpose, the devil would have destroyed us.

I would now speak a little of *the works of the devil*. His first work is, *dishonouring* God's law. He hates God's law, and he is determined to dishonour it. Hence Whitfield, in one of his practical sermons, speaking of Satan, says, that previous to Satan presenting the apple to our first parent he ate one himself; else how could it be said that when "she *saw* that the tree was good for food?" And he concludes from that, that she perceiving Satan to break the command of God, was thereby led to break the same command. I do not undertake to vouch for the truth of such an interpretation; I only throw it out to show you how Satan is ever engaged in dishonouring God's law, and how he will, if he can, present something which may draw men after him.

Look at the work of Satan *in disordering the whole universe*. For a specimen of this I only ask you to examine the state of the metropolis. Do you not see two sins exhibiting themselves in every street you pass through—drunkenness and debauchery?—the first of which is leading men to conduct that debases them below the beasts; and the latter is such that they are ever thirsting for gratification of the same. Do you not remember the Shechemites, how they committed the sin to which I am calling your attention, and the sons of Jacob entered into that city and destroyed them all? Do you not remember the curse of the Sodomites, how they brought on themselves swift destruction, and may be considered as going down to hell for that sin? Do you not remember the case of Cozbi, in the early part of the Old Testament? Can you not recall to your minds how it made David to sin, and caused the heart of Solomon to depart from the Lord? These sins are now reigning to an almost unprecedented extent; and shall we allow Satan thus to disorder the whole world, carrying his point in almost every engagement he exercises himself in, and we remain silent and

inactive spectators? Rather let us engage ourselves, hand and heart, to put down the work of Satan, and as far as we can to exhibit the standard of the Gospel of Christ, which shall issue in the defeat of Satan.

Let me digress here for a moment, in order to show you the consequences of sin. You may, when you walk the streets of London to-morrow, see many an individual whom you are ready to think is in the possession of happiness. Health may smile on their cheek, and vivacity seem to be in their conversation; and yet, because they are living in sin, they cannot be happy; or if they fancy they are, only think what is to be their condition; ere long, their bodies and their souls shall be in the fire of hell, far from an opportunity of hearing the Gospel of Christ to bring them peace, the bowels of divine mercy closed, their consciences eternally condemning them, all their talents and opportunities wasted, and they themselves pictures of eternal despair. Shall we allow Satan to be thus depopulating the world, and, as it were, colonizing hell, and yet remain inactive spectators? That must not be the case; and I will shew you, in as far as I can, the remedy for it.

Another work of Satan is, *taking away the sight of men*. Paul says he blinds men's eyes, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ should shine into their hearts. Satan is, as it were, blindfolding men in the world. How does he do this? It is by presenting something to their view by which, if possible, to deter them from looking at the excellences of the religion of Christ. Satan does not tie a handkerchief round their eyes in order to secure them as his own; but the way in which he blindfolds poor souls is by presenting some fascination, some sin, and he endeavours to cover that over in a way that is most likely to succeed in drawing aside their souls into eternal perdition. He blinds them with lust, sensuality, self-righteousness: something or other Satan is continually presenting before the eye of the mind, in order that Christ may be kept out of sight.

Another work of Satan is, *robbing us of our beauty*. You were created like to God himself, and God looked on the works of his hands, pronounced it all very good. But Satan has robbed us of our beauty: we are said to be "children of wrath, even as others;" as "fallen into the condemnation of the devil;" and that "out of the heart of man proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." Do you not perceive that Satan has robbed the whole creation of God of its beauty?

And now, instead of being created in the image of God, we are said to be created in the image of the wicked one: for the Psalmist declares that we are born in sin and shapen in iniquity; and our Saviour says, "Ye are of your father the devil." This is the case with reference to the children of God in their nature state.

Again, Satan robs us of our *clothing*. Our first parents, though they were naked, did not experience any shame when they used to converse in the garden of Eden, before they fell into sin: but on sooner had they rebelled against the commandment of their Creator, than Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord. And the Lord God called unto Adam, "Where art thou?" And he said, "I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself." And Satan hath robbed *us* of our clothing: we would rather hide ourselves from God than go to him by our own inclinations: so true is it that men naturally, rather than drag their bodies under the hearing of the Gospel of Christ, will run into any other place; they are so afraid of God and the word of God, that like Adam and his wife, they hide themselves from the Lord.

He has robbed us of our *strength*. "Of our strength?" say you. "Have we no power against Satan? Can we not do any thing to oppose him?" He has totally robbed you of your strength; and will you serve him still? If he has robbed you of your beauty, of your sight, and of your strength, will you still give yourselves to his service? Will you still devote all your energies to a person like this? Will you be robbed, and yet bless the hand that plunders you of your property? Will you have your eyes put out, and yet kiss the hand that is doing it? Will you have all that is worth possessing taken away from you, and yet at the same time devote yourselves to the destroyer? I could almost say, in the language of the Psalmist, "Do I not hate them that hate thee?" Is it not painful to the souls of the Lord's people to see men thus blinded, robbed, destroyed, murdered, as it were in the streets, and yet that they shall even bless and praise the hand which does it? But you would be just the same, were it not for the grace of God: for "what hast thou that thou hast not received? and who made thee to differ?" And so *we* may say with respect to ourselves: we are just the same, and we profess before you we are not a whit better than these by nature. You have not the power of liberating yourselves from your bondage. What a blessed declaration, then, is the

text to those who feel what they are ; seeing that if you have not the power to do any thing for your own liberation, Jesus Christ has done it for you !

He has robbed you of your *peace*. Perhaps there is some person ready to deny this : “ Satan has not robbed me of my peace : I enjoy much peace ; you can scarcely imagine how happy I was last week at the theatre (or some other synagogue of Satan). You will not persuade me that Satan has robbed me of my peace ; I enjoy much happiness ; I spend many pleasant days and evenings in what you call the service of Satan : I have the proof that Satan has not robbed me of my peace.” If I had an opportunity, I could prove to thee that Satan *has* robbed thee of thy peace ; and if not in thine own experience *now*, there is a day coming when thou wilt acknowledge the truth of what I assert, when thy present peace shall issue in eternal damnation, when your temporary enjoyment shall be exchanged for everlasting misery, when you shall go from the delightful service of Satan on earth to the miserable service of Satan in hell. Reflect on this, and see if you can enjoy yourselves the next week.

He has robbed you of your peace with God and your own conscience ; and however you may endeavour to persuade yourselves that you are not guilty of sin, try yourselves by the word of God, and if you can in your consciences approve what you do, and the manner in which you live, I should almost (I was going to say) despair of your salvation. But inasmuch as I know God has said he is capable of saving the most hardened and ungodly wretch, if he is the object of his everlasting love, therefore we are encouraged in preaching the Gospel to those who are hardened in sin, knowing that the power of the Spirit can apply the truth of the Gospel to the hearts of such. Hence Paul says, “ Where sin hath abounded, grace doth much more abound.”

In a word, the works of Satan may be summed up in one short sentence : he is labouring with all his power, ingenuity, and skill, to establish his own kingdom, and to put down that of Jesus Christ : and this leads me to

The third head of discourse : THE MANIFESTATION OF CHRIST. I shall call your attention to the *spiritual* manifestation of which the Scriptures speak in reference to Christ.

The first you find in Genesis, iii. 15, immediately after the fall ; and it was a blessed manifestation. You have in this an exhibition

of the love of God to his elect children. Immediately after their sins, God introduced himself into their presence, and having expostulated with them, he immediately manifests Christ as a Saviour from the consequences of their sin. Was Christ, say you, manifested then in the garden of Eden? He was, beloved: the same Christ who is preached to you to-night was preached to our first parents immediately after the fall; and no other name has ever been preached by God or God's ministers as the way of salvation. It was Christ who was preached as the remedy for that sin which our first parents committed in the garden of Eden: "The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent."

He was moreover manifested *in his human nature*. God was manifested in the flesh; and the manifestation of Christ in his human nature constitutes the great blessing of salvation; fulfilling the divine law which we had broken; having all the sins, without exception, of the Lord's elect people laid to his charge, and making a full, perfect, and sufficient satisfaction on the cross for those sins. He was manifested when, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, he was lifted up on the cross, that whosoever believeth in him as God manifest in the flesh, shall receive everlasting life: and the only manifestation of Christ to which we would direct your attention as being saving in its efficacy, is, that of a perfect atonement or sacrifice presented to the Eternal Father as a satisfaction for the sins of those who believe.

He is manifested *in the Scriptures of the Old Testament*. The prophets spoke of Christ: Paul says in Hebrews, i., "God at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in times past to the fathers by the prophets:" and every rite, and every type, and every shadow, which was exhibited in the temple worship, was only as a glass through which the mind was directed to the great sacrifice, Jesus Christ our living Head: and he was manifested in the Old Testament, that the Old Testament saints might believe in Him who destroyed the works of the devil.

But he is especially manifested in the *New Testament*. He says himself, "Search the Scriptures, for they are they which testify of me." You must search the Scriptures if you want to see Jesus Christ: it is necessary that you search God's holy word continually: and in your search be like the man who bought a piece of ground, understanding there was a treasure hid in it; selling all that you have to purchase this field, because of the treasure concealed therein. You should read the Word of God to discover the

Lord Jesus, for there he is so clearly manifested that you cannot fail, if under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, to discover him. You must remember the woman who having lost a piece of money, lighted a candle, and swept the house diligently: and when the Spirit of God enlightens your understanding, and brings you to feel that you have lost the salvation of your souls, light the candle, take the Scriptures, open the book, and pray to God that you may discover in the reading of the book that which you have lost: for Christ says, "Search the Scriptures, for they testify of me;" and Paul writing to Timothy says, "Give thyself to reading." Christ is manifested in both the Old Testament and the New, and both correspond, and unite in the manifestation of Christ to the church.

I now come to the manifestation of Christ personally, in the preaching of the word, and in the heart of the believer.

First, Christ has *personally* appeared on earth. You should never have your minds directed from this subject by any other man. I know Satan will try, if he can, to lead you to the consideration of the second coming of Christ. It is necessary that you consider this, but take care that he does not invent any false ideas respecting his second coming. Never let the second, or any other coming, imaginary or real, keep you from looking at Christ already come; for this is your salvation. God was manifested in the flesh; and it was when he appeared on earth that he overcame the works of the devil; and what is necessary that you understand and experience is, that he has destroyed them in your behalf. It is not enough that you hear and believe that he destroyed the works of the devil, but it is necessary that you feel in your hearts that he has destroyed them in reference to you.

Christ is manifested *in the preaching of the Gospel*. If we speak not of the Gospel it is because there is no light in us; and if we speak of any other Gospel it will not save your souls. Hence it is your bounden duty to come before with none other than Christ; nor to present to you any other remedy for sin than the blood of Christ; nor to exhibit any thing before you as the justification of your sins than the justification of Christ. There is a declarative manifestation of Christ in the faithful preaching of the Gospel: and we endeavour to exhibit him before you, that your eyes being directed to him, and withdrawn from all other objects, you may be transformed into his image as by the Spirit of the Lord. We are bound, as ministers of the Gospel, every time we present ourselves

before you, to declare nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified for the salvation of souls.

There is a *sacramental* manifestation of Christ. When we present to you the symbols of our Saviour's dying love, in the language of our church (which is a good interpretation of the subject), we present "the outward and visible sign." But has not God promised that, whatsoever means of grace you engage in, if engaged in with faith, prayer, and humility, you shall not only be partakers of the symbol, but of the thing signified? And if when you are pressing the bread with your teeth, and receiving the wine into your lips, you are enabled by faith to look to Jesus Christ, whose body was broken on the cross, and whose blood was spilt for his church—if you are enabled to look through the symbol to Him whom it signifies, you shall experience that not only are you partakers of the outward sign, but that you are strengthened by the application of the inward and spiritual grace. With respect to my own people, I would just say, Whenever you come to the table of the Lord, and it is my privilege to administer the symbols of my Saviour's dying love, let me beseech you to come in the spirit of prayer and faith, and your service shall never be in vain.

I must not omit to tell you that the only manifestation of Christ which can do any of you good is, the manifestation of Christ *to your hearts* by the Spirit of God. I may speak to you of divine matters ever so clearly, I may well arrange my arguments, and endeavour by the dint of human logic to confirm all I say; but it is in vain unless the Spirit of God be with me. You are assembled here to-night to hear God's word explained; and I must tell you, one and all, that my preaching cannot do you the least good, and your hearing will not be of the least advantage, unless you have the Spirit of God to apply it to your hearts, and seal it on your consciences, that, like bread cast upon the waters, it may be seen in your lives and experienced in your hearts. I mention this to show the necessity of continual supplication at the throne of grace, for the teaching, guiding, and sanctifying power of the Spirit of God. The works of the devil must be destroyed in your hearts by the formation of Christ in your souls, and you must have the experience and the evidence for yourselves that sin does not overcome you, that the world does not destroy you, and that the devil does not lead you into eternal ruin. "Sin shall not have dominion over you:" "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world:" Christ has destroyed "death, and him that hath the power of death, that is, the devil:"

“His name shall be called Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.” Now this is the manifestation of Christ which I wish to impress upon you—that you should have Christ in your hearts preserving and saving you.

This brings me to the fourth head of discourse—THE END OF THIS MANIFESTATION—to destroy the works of the devil. Did Satan dishonour God? Certainly he did, you say. Christ came to destroy the dishonouring service of Satan by honouring God. However God might be by the work of Satan, he is honoured by Jesus Christ in the salvation of a spiritual race, or the elect of God. Did Satan disgrace God’s law by breaking it and misleading others to break it? Christ has honoured that law, he is “the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.” He has satisfied the demand of God on behalf of us who had dishonoured his law, and in reference to Satan who has disgraced it.

Has Satan destroyed the government of God in the world? To a great extent he has: many of us see it, and it is a painful sight. Our relatives, our dearest and best friends are given up to the service of the wicked one; and Satan seems so far to have destroyed the government of God in the world, that even many of us have in our own families sharp experience because of our attachment to the truth of God’s word, and the doctrines of our holy religion; and we experience what our Saviour said should be the case—“A man’s foes shall be those of his own household,” and that he “came not to send peace on earth, but a sword.” Nation is rising against nation; and we see, as it were, men rioting upon the destruction of men; one human being living to the gratification of self at the expense of the misery of another; and there is such a diversified manifestation of the ruinous, destructive power of Satan, that we are ready to conclude there are very few vestiges left of the government of God in the world. But yet if Satan has disturbed the government, it is said with respect to Christ that “the government is laid on his shoulders,” and that “his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” I know with respect to the wicked they will not acknowledge this; but what will they think when I assert that they are constituted and made a means of promoting God’s glory: that even Satan in his self-destroying power, and the wicked in their self-gratifying propensities, all are overruled by a wise and powerful God for the advancement of his glory and the salvation of them that

are his, that the government of Christ is established on the earth, and Satan shall not by any means destroy it ?

Thus Satan appears continually engaged in the establishment of his kingdom, and Christ engaged in pulling it down. I might run through all the particulars to which I have called your attention, as to Christ being said to be made our peace, our strength, our beauty, and so on : Satan has cursed us—Christ has saved us : Satan has effaced Christ from our hearts ; the Holy Spirit impresses his image on our souls. Hence you see that this is all accomplished for us by virtue of Christ's death ; so that our sins and iniquities are entirely removed from the book of God's remembrance by the precious blood of Christ. We are assured, where the Holy Spirit has enabled us to experience the application of the word to our own souls, that Christ has overcome Satan and destroyed his works, to promote our happiness and eternal glory. It was his Father's will that this should be the case ; and hence it is that he was sustained in it. His love for his people enabled him to persevere in the arduous work : and the divine purposes would have been frustrated if Jesus Christ had not succeeded in the undertaking.

And what shall I say by way of conclusion ? I know, as I said before, I cannot change your hearts ; that is out of my power : although we talk of application, we know at the same time it is the province of the Spirit to do this. But I would say, *See the independent Deity of Jesus Christ*. Could a mere man have overcome Satan, such as I have represented him to you ? Could a mere man have atoned for the sins of so many millions composing God's church ? Could a mere man have sustained the weight of iniquity which Christ sustained ? Could a mere man have fulfilled God's divine law ? Hence it was necessary that Christ should be perfect God and man in order to the accomplishment of this wonderful salvation, which it is our privilege to enjoy here, and hope to participate eternally hereafter.

See how the love of God the Father hath appeared unto men. Could he have exhibited it in any way more calculated to direct our affection towards him ? Could there have been any exhibition of the love of God like to this ? Do not the Scriptures say that " a man may die for his friend ;" but " God commendeth his love towards us in that *while we were yet sinners* Christ died for us."

See the exceeding love of Christ. You cannot get an exhibition

of it from any other quarter. You may read the writings of all the sages that have lived; you may dip into all the works of theology that have been written; you may hear all the sermons which have been preached; all are incapable of giving you an exhibition of God's love equal to that which the Spirit gives, when he shows you Jesus Christ as a Saviour.

Consider the designation of sin in this passage—*the works of the devil*—and I ask if you will adhere to it? Whose servant art thou, O sinner? The servant of the devil. Whose work dost thou do? Thou art doing the devil's work. Is thy situation an honourable one, and enviable? Is it any thing of which thou canst boast? Thou art the servant of the devil, and doing the work of the devil; and thou shalt live with the devil hereafter, if not brought to believe in Christ. It is not merely a departure from some rule of morality—not merely defects in conversation or practice; but thou art engaged in the service of the worst master, the most dishonourable being in the universe of God—the most hateful, debased, and accursed: every thing that language can express I would append to the designation of him whose servant thou art. Canst thou live in it? Canst thou continue in it? Art thou determined to go away to-night with an intention to fulfil thy desires in the gratification of sin? If this is thy determination, go thy way; but remember that the end of thy way is death—everlasting death.

See the blessed state and condition of believers. The works of the devil are destroyed in reference to him: there is “no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus”—those who prove themselves to be such—because they “walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.” All their sins are forgiven, for Christ has pardoned them; they are sanctified or set apart by the Father. They are “complete in Christ Jesus,” and looked upon as without a spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing:” the works of the devil, and the works of themselves, all that they have done, are entirely remitted to them, and they are enabled to experience in the reception of Christ that they are one with God by faith in Christ, and shall live and reign with him eternally hereafter.

My dear hearers, let me impress upon you this subject: when you return home to-night consider what you have heard, and propose this question to yourselves—Shall I for the time to come live in the service of God, and rely on Jesus Christ and the finished work of salvation wrought out by him, and be blessed with ever-

lasting blessedness? May God the Holy Spirit enable you to decide of the Lord that you may live in the enjoyment of the peace of God here, and that we may have the happiness of seeing you in heaven hereafter, that we may cast our crowns at the feet of Jesus Christ, and say, "Thou art worthy, for thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."

BELIEVERS COMPLETE IN CHRIST

REV. J. SHERMAN,

SURREY CHAPEL, OCTOBER 25, 1835.

“Ye are complete in him.”—COLOSSIANS, ii. 10.

ONE would suppose, my brethren, that in apostolical days there would be enough to warn the church that she should not receive new doctrines or false teachers. We, naturally enough, think that the influence which accompanied their messages to their congregations, the numerous converts which were made to their ministrations, and the simplicity and truth with which their testimony was delivered, were enough to assure their hearers that they were from God, and that therefore the message which they brought must necessarily be attended to. Yet such was the love of novelty, such the “itching ears,” such the wandering of men’s minds, that the apostles themselves could not please some people. They were often, the apostle tells us, “in peril amongst false brethren;” and we are assured, from his fellow-apostles, they were in peril among erring brethren, weak brethren. It required, therefore, the utmost watchfulness on their part, as well as the most tender and pathetic exhortations, especially with regard to the weak of their flock, to keep them from the dissimulation of those who would preach “another Gospel.”

This was necessary even in the Colossian church—a church that was much beloved of Paul, and dear to his heart; so that he had to exhort them to “beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.” Some of these preachers preached philosophy; that is, they endeavoured to reduce the truths of the Gospel to the false rules of their philosophy, and followed those men who were fond of their own talents and endowments. Thus they put mere eloquence in the place of Christ, and philosophy in the place of the simple truths of the Gospel. They could not endure to hear plain truth in plain language, but it must be

adorned with the flowers and figures of rhetoric. There were others who attempted to "spoil" the people "through vain deceits;" that is, they gave them excitement instead of spirituality, noise for truth, declamation for application of the truth to their consciences. The consequence was, that the hearers were never confirmed, never established, in the truth; and whatever teacher came and manifested these things to the people, he was the man, and they were immediately running after him, and siding themselves with him as a partisan. The apostle tells us they were "like children, tossed about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive."

And is there not still as much reason for caution as ever? Men still love the same degree of novelty, still have the same itching ears, still are characterized by the same wandering minds. It is difficult to find a congregation any thing like the Bereans, who will not take any thing we say for truth, but are determined, each for himself, to take the Bible when they go home, and compare the sermon with it. People are careless of comparing what they hear with the Word of God, and of bringing it to that standard. It is therefore the more necessary to exhibit to believers the necessity of their stability in the truth; and the apostle offers two reasons for this necessity. One is, the glory and dignity of Christ. It is not meet to see them perpetually wavering in the doctrines of the Gospel; for "in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." The next reason is, their completeness by that alliance. They are "complete in him;" and therefore (as if he said) you need no better Saviour; you can have no better escape; ye are already complete in him: why, therefore, look after something new?

I know not that this is a sin chargeable on any who hear me this morning—I know not that any individual present has itching ears, is desirous of hearing new truths in eloquent language, adorned with the beauties of rhetoric; but I know that one way to prevent it in the church of Christ is to present the benefits and the excellences which they derive from this association with the Lord Jesus. I now publish this to every believer present, whether he be stronger or weaker, whether he be a babe, or a son, or a father in Christ. I am aware that multitudes of teachers have gone over to the Antinomian school, and have exhibited the power and the blessedness of some of the distinguishing truths of the Gospel, unconnected with their practical effect upon the hearts and lives; and that, in consequence of this, many teachers, extremely fearful that the

people would run with them, have gone to the opposite extreme, kept those truths in the back ground, and introduced nothing but doctrines of a practical nature. Now, I believe, with your late venerable pastor, that the only way to destroy Antinomianism is to exhibit good sound Calvinism. I believe the only way to take from the spirits of the people any itch for novelty is to exhibit to them the fulness of the blessedness of their state in Christ, and then to draw from that state the powerful motives which would induce them to walk honourably, humbly, and actively in the world.

I beg, therefore, to lay particular emphasis on the sentiment, that this text does not refer to *advanced* Christians only. Some may be induced to suppose, that it would do well for an aged father, standing on the brink of eternity, and about to enter another world; but it is a text which applies to every believer in the whole family of God, be he weak or strong, poor or rich, trembling, and “fearful to launch away,” or with the full assurance of hope, and the brightest prospects of the heavenly world. Therefore, let all who are interested in the Saviour give audience this morning, and pray that the Spirit may enable me to exhibit this blessedness.

First: Believers are complete in Christ BY UNION TO HIS PERSON. There are four figures by which this most delightful union is set forth in the Scriptures.

It is compared to a *vine*. The branch is not tied to the stem; it is not dependent on some foreign support for its existence: the branch naturally grows out of the vine to which it is allied, forms part of the vine itself, is nourished and grows up by sap derived from it, and bears fruit by virtue of its union with the vine. This doctrine is beautifully set forth in John, xv., and you need only to be reminded of the chapter, that you may read the verses when you go home. “Without me,” says the Saviour, that is, separated from me, “ye can do nothing.” How secure, how blessed is such a union!

The union is exemplified by the stones of a building resting on a *foundation*: “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, that ye should offer spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” Believers are stones, but Christ is the *lively* stone; and they are made living stones by being built upon him. What can be more completely safe? “Upon this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” How many attempts have been made to dis sever Christians from the living stone, and the life imparted to their spirits by union to

Christ! The fire, the sword, chains, imprisonments, and confiscations, have all been instruments by which men have attempted to destroy this union; but they could not. When the magistrate told Polycarp that he had beasts of prey which would devour him, "Do your best," he said, "I will not deny my Lord and Master. Four-score years and six have I served him, and he has never said an unkind word to me; and shall I deny him now?" When poor Jane West, the blind woman, who used to pay people to teach her the Scriptures, because she could not read, was condemned at Derby for her attachment to Christ, the poor young woman, led by the hand of her brother, said, "I go to the stake with cheerfulness, because I am going to Christ." And when John Knight and Bradford were united together to be burnt in Smithfield, and poor John Knight, the apprentice boy, only nineteen, was a martyr for Christ, and his heart began to faint, Bradford said, "Cheer up, brother, we shall have a merry supper with Christ our Lord to-night." It is not possible to break or divide this union.

This union is compared to *the marriage union*. "Thy maker is thy husband; the Lord of Hosts is his name." Now this is the closest of all living unions and friendships upon earth; but it is often unhappily, sometimes speedily dissevered; and, at the very best, this union only reaches to the most distant period of the longest life; imperfection is attached to every part of it. But this to which it is compared is infinitely above it: the flame of Christ's love can never be quenched; many waters cannot quench it, nor can the floods drown it. Nothing in his bride shall ever produce a divorce; he hateth putting away; and, strange to say, ere he united himself to his bride, he foresaw all her iniquities, rebellions, backslidings, hardness of heart, and wanderings; and yet he says, "I love thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee." All unions among men are imperfect: *this* is complete.

It is compared to *the union of the members with the head*. We are said to "grow up in Him who is the living head," to be members one of another, attached and united to Christ as the great Head of the church. How firmly united is every member to the head! What sympathy has the head with every part! How the head influences, directs, and governs the whole! How impossible to sever the head from the members without the destruction of both! "Because I live, ye shall live also." The head cannot say to the feet, not to the smallest member, "I have no need of

thee." Think of this, weak Christian, that the completion of the body of the church to Christ would not be perfect without you; that the meanest member of Christ's church must get to heaven, or else heaven itself would be deficient of one for whom Christ shed his blood. "He that toucheth them toucheth the apple of my eye." O! how completely safe, blessed, and happy, must this union be! Friendships shall be dissolved, unions shall be broken, contracts shall be set aside by death, those on whom you have leaned, die, and be no more for ever, and Jonathans, and those on whom you have trusted, depart to another world. But of this union you may ask, with triumph, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"

Secondly. Believers are complete in Christ BY JUSTIFICATION THROUGH HIS BLOOD. It is to be noted that they were the children of wrath, even as others; the penalties and curses of a broken law were their portion as well as the portion of others, the sentence was issued against them, and they, like others, were in the prison of justice until the reprieve of mercy should be expired, and then be cast into the dungeon of hell. This was their state; they were in themselves anything but complete; they owed ten thousand talents, and they had not a farthing to pay; they were debtors to the crown and dignity of heaven, and yet obstinate, and unwilling to submit. But when God, by his Spirit, discovered to them their true condition, their danger and misery, they saw, for the first time, that they had nothing which could make them complete before him. If for the future they attempted to be perfect, and said, "I will resolve never to commit sin any more," then there were the sins of their past lives; how can these be atoned for? If they said, "I will endeavour to atone for them by some perfect acts of obedience for the future," then this Scripture met them, "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified." The very discovery of their guilt obliges them to cry, like the leper, "Unclean! unclean!" And what was to be done? Must they lie in this state of guilt, and perish? No—everlasting glories crown the brow of Jesus of Nazareth!—though they are incomplete in themselves, they are complete in him. When Jacob hesitated to send Benjamin into Egypt, in order that corn might be bought for the family, Judah said, "Send him, my father, I will be surety for him:" and these words satisfied Jacob's mind, and he entrusted the child to Judah. And so Jesus presented himself to his Father for us, and said, "I will be surety for them; I will take their debts on myself;

their curse shall fall on me, their punishment shall be mine." The terms were accepted: in the fulness of time Christ came, "made of a woman, made under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." "Made under the law," that is, made under its commands, its penalties, its cursings. And when he came in our flesh, in the same nature that sinned, then justice demanded of him all our debt. Jehovah laid upon him the iniquities of us all: "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts." Now those sins he bore, those curses he endured; and being God as well as man, he suffered all the punishment his people would have endured through all eternity. In the strong language of Erskine, "With one great draught, he drank hell dry." There was sufficient in this atonement to be an acquittal for all the sins and iniquities which we have committed.

Now hearken to the result. Christ offered himself a sacrifice to God, a sweet-smelling savour, and the Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake, because he has magnified the law and made it honourable. He "became sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God through him." "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us:" so that now when the sins of Judah are inquired for there are none; and when the sins of Israel are inquisitorially sought after they cannot be found; the great scapegoat on whom the sins of the people were laid, carried them into the land of everlasting forgetfulness. "I have cast their iniquities behind my back;" and he will never turn to look on them again; he has cast them into the depths of the sea, and not one of them shall ever rise up against them.

The moment a convinced sinner believes this, the moment he receives the atonement of the Lord Jesus, and the righteousness he wrought out, his guilt is removed, his innocency is declared, his sentence is reversed; and he is not only a candidate for heaven, but is actually permitted to have a foretaste of it. The merits of Christ are imputed to the sinner, and are as if he had wrought them himself; he is complete, therefore, in Christ, without any addition of good works. He has a righteousness, and what is it? A full righteousness, adequate to the satisfaction of the Eternal Father: an only righteousness; for there is "no other name given under heaven whereby men can be saved:" an everlasting righteousness, which shall endure as long as his immortal spirit shall endure. It

is the righteousness of God; the righteousness which God the Father, in infinite wisdom, devised; the righteousness which God the Son, in unutterable goodness, wrought out; the righteousness which God the Holy Ghost, in unspeakable mercy, applies to the conscience. It is the only righteousness which God requires, and which man needs; and the moment it is embraced, God and conscience are satisfied. All the attributes of God are reconciled and harmonized; justice and truth meet together, righteousness and peace embrace each other.

“Ye are complete in him.” Think of this with joy, ye who are justified by faith, and do not let Satan deprive you of the joy. What has the law to do with you as it respects condemnation? It is magnified. What has justice to do with you as respects his demands? They are satisfied. What has sin to do with you as respects its condemning power? It is put away by the sacrifice of Christ. What has Satan to do with you as respects his condemning influence in the soul? Christ has obtained a victory over, and destroyed him that has the power of sin, that is, the Devil. Therefore, lift up your heads with joy, and sing, “I will greatly rejoice; I will glory in the God of my salvation.”

Believers are complete in him BY RECEIVING FROM HIS FULNESS. “It hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell.” All the fulness of the Godhead bodily, all the goodness of the manhood visibly, all the fulness of the Mediator mediatorially; this is the fulness which he possesses; and he possesses it in consequence of the completion of his work, and of satisfying the Divine justice. When the people were present on the day of Pentecost, they were astounded at the things which they saw and heard. Peter explained it, and said, “All this has happened because Christ has ascended to heaven, and has received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, and shed forth this which ye now see and hear.” He “ascended up on high, and received gifts for men, even the rebellious.”

Now it is every believer's privilege to receive out of this fulness, and grace for grace; and what a fulness must it be to supply a believer's wants! I have seen a little paper, called, “Fifty-two Wants of the Believer in Jesus.” They might as well be called fifty-two thousand, or fifty-two million. Fifty-two wants! Why, fifty-two wants will never fill up his mind: these will never reach his desires and his necessities. But his fulness is able to satisfy the most enlarged desires of the most enlarged mind. Does he want

spiritual blessings? “It has pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;” “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ.” Does he want life when he feels himself fainting? “Ye are dead, but your life is hid with Christ in God.” Does he want to realize and lay hold of *eternal life*? This is the record, “that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.” Does he want *peace*? We have “peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Does he want *communion with the Father*, and *fellowship with his Spirit*? By him “we have fellowship with the Father,” “access by one Spirit unto the Father.” Does he want *joy*? “We joy in God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Does he long for *forgiveness*? “We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.” Does he want *acceptance*? We are “accepted in the beloved.” Does he want *adoption*? We have “the adoption of sons” through Him who is the first-born Son of the Father. Does he want *heaven*? There is union with him: “Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am.” He sustains to all the offices which constitute the felicity of his saints. When our friends are dead, or when they are unkind to us, where can we go but to Christ? He is a brother born for adversity, a friend that loveth at all times. He is an everlasting Father, that pities his children, and comforts his weak and mourning saints. He is the husband, the physician, the friend, the guide, the prophet, the priest, the king, the portion, the inheritance, the all and in all, of his saints. You have afflictions sanctified to you, mercies granted to you, graces upheld within you, and heaven to receive you. Tell me what you can want beside. O that I could this morning impart the comfort of this most precious truth! You may, according to the flesh, be in want, but you have abundance in Christ; in pain, but you have health in Christ; in outward affliction, but you have comfort in Christ; on the verge of eternity, but you have happiness in Christ.

Fourthly: Believers are complete in Christ IN THEIR SANCTIFICATION AND GLORIFICATION. I put these two together, because neither are at present perfect, and may be considered incomplete. Still, even in their sanctification, believers are “complete in him.” “Who of God is made unto us *sanctification*,” which, though progressive as to its nature, is complete in Christ their head. A sculptor, when he commences his work upon a figure, begins at the feet, or perhaps the head; he forms an arm, or a foot, or the head

it is all incomplete. But when a child of God is regenerated, it is all perfect; all the parts are perfect—perfect in their kind, though not in their degree: as an infant when it is born is perfect in its parts, and only wants growth that it may arrive to maturity; so a child of God, when renewed in the spirit of his mind, the new man formed within him is as perfect as to its parts as it ever will be; it has only to be perfected in its degree through grace and boundless mercy.

So of *glorification*. As in the Saviour while he was on the earth there were some glimpses of his glory manifested, the tabernacle not hiding the shekinah, but there being some glimpses of light pervading the tabernacle of the flesh; so the saint, while on earth, has not glory in perfection, but he has a taste of it. And what a taste of it has been sometimes had! By and bye you are to have its fulness: your glorification is complete in him: “Where I am there shall also my servants be.” The head will not live without the members: as Moses said, “Not a hoof shall be left behind;” so none that he redeemed by his blood, none that have trod in his steps, none that have sought for residence in glory, shall be left behind.

Let me say, in conclusion, *love this blessed Saviour in whom you are so blessed*. All your salvation is by him, all your comfort is from him, all your joy derived from him, all your hopes centred in him, all your happiness from him; and will you not love him? Methinks it is unnecessary to ask a saint to love his Lord and Master: can he do otherwise? Not love Christ! Not delight in Christ! Shame on the wretch that would not love him! But a saint who is allied to him by such bonds, who has received such blessings from him, and is in expectation of heaven from him, far be the thought from you! Why, his name is like ointment poured forth, “as music in the ear, jubilee in the heart, and honey in the mouth:” and will you not love him? Yes, I think I hear some who are coming to his table to commemorate his love, say,

“Yes! I love thee, and adore:
O for grace to love thee more!”

Be it so: and if you wish to love him more, take these three directions, that you may get a little more of this love: Be alive in his company: meditate on his love: and employ yourselves in his service.

Let your completeness in Christ *comfort you under your own imperfections and incompleteness*. What a contrast does the saint form to his Saviour! How incomplete, beloved, are your joy, your love, your comfort; what want of perfection! What room is there for

lamentation over your temper, over the order which you maintain in your houses, over the want of time for devotion, over the lamentable deficiencies of a consistent and humble walk with God! Now Christ is your pattern, and you are not to aim to copy this believer or that believer; but to aim at the perfections of your Lord and Master.

Finally, the Saviour invites those who are sensible of their incompleteness *to come to him for perfection*. Have you ever considered that it would be impossible for a holy God to receive a spirit in heaven that was not perfect, and that it is necessary that the individual who enters heaven should be perfectly holy? The Deity could not associate but with such; and the individual could not associate with Deity if he were not such. Heaven would be hell itself to the ungodly mind; there would be nothing like a paradise to the wicked man in heaven: all his companions on earth differ from the saints; all his employments and enjoyments differ from those of saints. What would such a man be in heaven unless renewed, changed, and completed in Christ? You have no title to heaven till you get it through the Lord Jesus Christ; and there is no entrance but by faith in his blood. You are incomplete in your happiness. Look at it: what is it? You have perhaps some few relishes of pleasure, rolling it like a sweet morsel under your tongue: but then the bitter reflection, the lying down at night and thinking of the day, the ruminating over past life, and seeing where sin has left you! All these leave stings on your conscience, which nothing can extract but the virtue of the Saviour's blood. And what are your prospects? You are hastening on fast to the eternal world, and very soon must enter on it: and what prospect have you? The man who is going a long journey and does not prepare, is surely a foolish traveller: and you are travelling from earth to heaven, and have no preparation for it, nothing that shall give you entrance into glory, no prospect but that of the lost, no portion but that of the damned! But I have good news and glad tidings to tell you this morning. Though, sinners, you are incomplete in yourselves, multitudes may be made complete in Christ. There is no barrier to your acceptance of his grace and mercy but your own unwillingness. It is a sad thing to think of the multitudes who attend the Gospel ministry in this place who know nothing of God! My heart yearns over you, dear hearers; and I feel for your state, if you will not feel for yourselves. May God have mercy on you and enable you to feel the wretchedness of your condition, that you may not rest one single moment till you find rest in Christ!

THE TARES OF THE FIELD.

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PERCY CHAPEL, CHARLOTTE STREET, FITZROY SQUARE, SEPT. 4, 1834.

“Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field,” &c.—MATTHEW, xii. 36—41.

JESUS sent the multitude away to whom he had spoken in parables publicly, and received his disciples at the house for a private conference. There is meaning in this, and instruction to be derived from it, to which therefore I call your attention. When we read of the disciples of Jesus in any of the four gospels, there is either reference made to a company or multitude of them, or a select and limited number. In John, vi. the *many* are undoubtedly referred to, for at verse 60 it is recorded they were offended at the things he had taught in the synagogue, and said, “Who can hear?” and at verse 66 it is added, “From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.” It would seem they had been received to discipleship, by some rite, upon their profession of faith in Messiah, and as inquirers and learners, but not upon any evidence of being regenerate: that rite I believe to have been baptism—the easy yoke of Christ, instead of that grievous and heavy yoke of circumcision which the law imposed: and being so admitted they were numbered with the disciples, and eligible to their privileges according to the words of Jesus, Matt. xi. 29: “Take my yoke upon you, and *learn* of me.” Then, what he had done, he commanded to be perpetuated in the church by his followers after him; for in chap. xxviii. 19, it is written, “Go ye therefore and *teach* all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: *teaching* them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” Here, you perceive, a teaching is enjoined to call to a profession of faith and of discipleship, and then a *teaching* to instruct in “the mysteries of the kingdom of God,” and to observe all things which Jesus had commanded his servants to make known.

But many of the disciples, as we have seen, despised their privi-

lege, took offence at his teaching in the synagogue, and apostatized from the profession they had made, and walked no more with him; an evident proof to my mind, that the notion of what is called "believers' baptism," or refusing baptism to any but those who approve themselves to the church as regenerate, is an error: for this supposes them to have received the baptism of the Spirit, which is the greater, before they are eligible to water baptism, which is the lesser; whereas the admission to discipleship, and to instruction in the mysteries of the kingdom, was granted by our Lord, to those who had not the greater, for they turned away from Him and walked with Him no more.

But the disciples mentioned in the first verse of our text, were clearly those who prized their privileges, a select number; for when he had dismissed the multitude or congregation, including themselves, to whom he had spoken publicly, and had gone to the house, they came to him for a private conference, saying, "Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field." Why *this* parable? for you will observe he had spoken three others in connexion with it, and this was the second of the four. Concerning the three, and perhaps the succeeding ones also, it would seem they had no difficulty, for there is no inquiry, on record, about them, so they thought they understood them; but the parable of the tares they understood not. Perhaps they imagined it contradicted the other. They possibly received the idea that all people by degrees were to receive the good leaven of the Gospel, that the Gospel-tree would spread by little and little until it should fill all the earth, and that therefore the sower of the good seed, verse 24, whose the field of right is, would have his field full of wheat, the world converted, and the declaration of our Lord, that tares would be found in the field even at the time of harvest, startled and crossed them, and they wanted to have their difficulty solved*; so they came unto him and singled this parable out from the rest, and said, "Declare, explain it unto us."

Learn from this conduct, my dear hearers, that it is the privilege of the baptized, the disciplined, who are inquirers and learners of the mysteries of the kingdom, to apply privately to any of those, who are appointed to teach, under Christ the Shepherd and Bishop of

* When the above view is given the harmony is destroyed; but if the parable of the "grain of mustard-seed" is understood as descriptive of the Gospel going through the earth, and not of universal conversion; and if the leavening of the whole three measures of meal is considered to signify the conversion of all the children of the kingdom—(see the burial service, "That it may please thee of thy gracious goodness shortly to accomplish the number of thine elect and hasten thy kingdom") then the harmony is preserved with the parable of the tares, and with all our Lord's parables: and this seemeth to be right, inasmuch as a tree is not a perfect covering, though its branches spread around—nor is three a perfect number.

souls, respecting any thing which in the public assembly they may not have understood, saying, Explain to us that statement, or parable it may be, which occurred in your sermon, which we understood not. And, my brethren, let me say, that while it is cowardly and wicked to annoy a servant of Christ with anonymous or nameless letters, it is becoming and right to follow the example of these early disciples. I thank God that I am rarely troubled with letters of this kind, and to shew the folly of the practice, if it were so, I should return them, on discovering the same to be anonymous, unread and unpaid for, to him that brought them; a privilege which is righteously allowed, against such an annoyance, while to be followed into one's privacy, by a sincere inquirer after truth, is, and will be the greater privilege: and whether that inquirer be the poorest or the richest, the wisest or the most ignorant, attention to his difficulty will not only be given as a duty, but given with delight and rejoicing of heart for the truth's sake.

Now an inquiry was so made by one of you during the last week, respecting a passage in a sermon which was difficult or dark, and which, being met privately, has also appeared of sufficient importance for public improvement, lest the same difficulty should be common with others; and without more special notice of it, it will be intelligible to such, and sufficient to observe that the parable before us is pertinent and blessedly suited to our purpose. It sets forth the supreme authority of Jesus in his church; but at the same time the awful influence and dreadful power of Satan against the church and in the world. But hear it. Verse 37: Jesus "answered and said unto the disciples, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be at the end of this world."

In attempting to enlarge upon, or, by the aid of other scriptures to draw out the meaning of this our Lord's explanation of the parable, I propose to notice, the field; the sower of the good seed: the sower of the tares; and the end or result.

First, THE FIELD. Verse 38: "The field is the world." Now the word translated world in this verse is *κοσμος*—*the world*; which is always used when the globe, the whole earth on which we live, is meant, which is therefore *the field*. In verses 39 and 40 you

read of the end of the world, and perhaps infer, which is most natural, that our world is to have an end, is to be done away; but not so; for in both these verses the Greek word is *αιών*, and this is always used, when time and not substance—when an age or dispensation, and not the material earth, is meant. It is therefore the end of the Christian dispensation, and not the end of the field; for the field is the globe, whose foundations are not to be removed at any time (Psalm civ. 5). In this field the sufferings have been seen, and in it shall also the glory be revealed.

Secondly, THE SOWER OF THE GOOD SEED IN THIS FIELD. Verse 37: "He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man;" and verse 38: "The seed which grows and bears fruit are the children of the kingdom." Learn then a great and comprehensive truth—that though the whole human race, these children, as well as others, became guilty by the fall of Adam into sin, and thereby all of them by nature the children of wrath, and as such, subject to Satan's influence, yea, and rule, so long as disobedient and evil workers in their unregenerate state; yet because sons, according to the eternal purpose of their Father, in due time the seed of eternal life is sown in their hearts (Gal. iv. 6); and Jesus is the sower, and by this act of mercy and grace, he secures and reserves them unto himself, and for his kingdom. They are found indeed in the likeness of the first man, Adam; but the second man, who is "the Lord from heaven," and "a quickening spirit," puts fresh life into their souls, and by his spirit renews them in his own image (2 Cor. iii. 18), and makes them his own by adoption and grace. He is "formed in their hearts the hope of glory," the glory of the kingdom to which they are heirs. But how so? Was there no difference between them and others? Are they not called "good ground" (verse 8), and answer to the "good seed?" (verse 38). Whereas the seed of the sower is all good (verse 19), and he has none besides; which seemeth to denote a difference among men before the sowing of the seed.

Hearken, my brethren: there is no natural difference and yet a difference, and the Lord makes it. As the husbandman prepareth the good ground, and not the rock, neither the trodden way-side, for the reception of the seed he soweth, so the Lord prepareth the hearts of the children of the kingdom for his seed (Prov. xvi. 1). "The preparations of the heart in man, is from the Lord." If the hearts of men be not prepared when the Gospel-seed is sown (verse 19) then Satan, even in the assembly of the saints, catcheth

away that which was sown in the heart, just as the birds of the air take away the corn from the rock or way-side; but when the hearts of the children are prepared, then Satan has no power to prevent its abiding, but the Lord omnipotent causes it both to enter and abide, and it is the quickening word, the incorruptible seed which liveth and abideth for ever. Thereby are they the sown of the Son of man, the subjects of his grace, and the children of the kingdom about to be revealed.

Thirdly, THE SOWER OF THE TARES. "But the tares are the children of the wicked one: and the enemy that sowed them is the devil" (verse 38, 39.) Awful truth! the wicked are the sown of Satan and children of his kingdom, as certainly as the righteous are the seed of the Lord Jesus Christ and heirs of his kingdom; while the field, in which both the good and bad are sown, is the same, and both grow together (mixedly as tares and wheat) until the harvest, which is (συντέλεια τοῦ αἰῶνος) the end of the age.

But there is more truth yet to be stated, to which I beg your serious attention. We have said that the Son of man is supreme in his church; but that Satan has influence against the church and dreadful power in the world. It is now the time to show the same. When the world apostatized from God by sin, it was given over to Satan, the fallen spirit, the enemy of mankind, so that in a sense he spake not untruly when he said, "the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them are mine;" for our Lord Jesus himself, three times in the Gospel of St. John, (chap. xii. 31, xiv. 30, and xvi. 11), calleth him the Prince or Ruler of this globe, ὁ ἀρχὸν τοῦ κόσμου τούτου, and although he speaketh of him as being judged, and cast out, yet it is only prospectively, for the Holy Ghost by St. Paul calleth him (2 Cor. iv. 4), the God of this age, ὁ Θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου, shewing that his kingdom extendeth over the whole globe, and to the end of the age, *i.e.* till the time of harvest: and that there is no exception, beside that which sovereign grace maketh, we may cite another proof; it occurred in the second lesson in the evening service of last week (see 1 John, v. 19): "And we know that we are of God, and that the whole world lieth in wickedness." The words are ὁ κόσμος ὅλος, the whole globe, κείται, lieth, ἐν τῷ πονηρίῳ, not in wickedness only, but *in the wicked one*. It is the same word as is so rendered in verse 38 of our text. So that by a frightful, dreadful adoption, all (except the sown of Christ) are declared to be his children and to do his works, (Johu. viii. 44): "Ye are of your father the devil, and the works

of your father ye do." This was spoken, indeed, by our Lord to the Jews; but the same authority telleth us, that "there is no difference; for that Jew and Gentile are both under sin;" nay, and more than this, the children of Christ's kingdom, while in the flesh, are in that world of which Satan is the god and ruler for the time of the age; and therefore up to the time of the seed of eternal life being sown in their hearts, and so long as they are disobedient and doing his works, he rules in their hearts also, and leads them captive at his will (2 Tim. ii. 26). For remember, conversion is this, a deliverance "from the power of darkness and a translation into the kingdom of God's dear Son" (Col. i. 13). It speaks where the convert was, and in whose power, up to the time of his conversion; and the translation marks the change and turning of the sinner "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God;" nay, it shows where and what he was before. He was a slave of Satan up to the time of the holy seed entering his heart; yet though a slave, never a child of Satan, for in the purpose of God, from before the foundation of the world, was he foreseen what grace in time makes him, and all the seed likewise as marked by the former part of the verse, and especially by the pronoun *we*: "We know that we are of God," of the word of truth hath he begotten us, and Him have we received by faith, and are "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John, i. 13). So that, beloved, salvation is of God; and if there be a doubt with regard to this great deliverance from the wicked one, and from his wicked works, let it be removed by the infallible word of truth; see that black catalogue of sins which were practised at Corinth (1 Cor. vi. 9, 10); and then read verse 11; "*And such were some of you*:" but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

It must now surely be evident to every one who bows to the authority of Scripture, and reveres its truth, that we are all in this field; and if not the sown of Christ, are the sown of Satan; or at least if not delivered by the grace of Christ from the ways of disobedience and sin, are more or less in the power of the enemy, and are doing his works. Of all subjects, therefore, to us the Gospel is most important, and ought to be the most welcome. Harken then, I pray you, to the Gospel of the blessed God, to good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. Believe, and they are yours. I John, iii. 8, is for our encouragement. "For this

purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil ;” not instantaneously, but gradually ; and eventually, completely and entirely. This purpose began to be unfolded by his incarnation. The prophecy or promise, Gen. iii. 15, was answered thereby, in that He, the seed of the woman, did bruise the old serpent in his usurped dominion, for he appeared in the heart of it, and struck a blow at his very head, declaring his overthrow, while in himself alone Satan had no part ; “ holy, harmless, and undefiled,” the prince of this world, as at the first by temptation, so at the last in the time of his passion came, but had nothing in Him. Stopped therefore he was at once, and to the end, in his work against the Son of God himself, and at the same time checked in his dreadful operations among the children of men. See that remarkable passage in Luke, xi. 21, where he is described as possessing the body of a man as his palace, and the powers and faculties of the man himself, as one hath his own goods in quietness and peace, without another disputing his right ; and he is said to be not only strong, but armed ; and thus he possesseth his victim until a stronger than he, until the Lord Jesus Christ, Almighty, expelleth the usurper from the hearts of the children of the kingdom, and there enthrones himself.

But neither is this completely effected so long as the body of sin remaineth, since through and by means of its natural lusts he tempteth and assaulteth to the last ; yet did he receive a further bruise on his head touching the matter of possession ; for though I dare not say there hath never been an instance of demoniacal possession since, yet I dare affirm there hath been none such as were common in the days of his flesh, when he delivered one of a legion, or of many devils, and Mary the Magdalen of seven : and one thing yet remaineth to be said with regard to this awful possession, that Jesus by his word cast him out ; and not only so, but stopped his work after that manner in the person, saying (Mark, ix. 25), “ Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee come out of him, and enter no more into him.”

And this should console and sustain every believer in Jesus, not so as to be off his guard, as if the enemy were altogether destroyed, but to watch against his devices, seeing that he yet is in this world. See Eph. vi. 12, “ We wrestle not against flesh and blood (only), but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness (or rather wicked spirits), in high places.”

But for further and greater encouragement, and to be assured of the entire conquering of this great enemy in the Lord's good time, look to that precious promise in Rom. xvi. 20: "The God of peace shall bruise (or tread) Satan under your feet shortly." "*The God of peace,*" (John, xiv. 27; Eph. ii. 13, 15), "*even the Lord himself* shall descend from heaven with a shout (1 Thes. iv. 16): and then shall the "prince of the power of the air," (Eph. ii. 2) "the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience," be cast down and bruised under our feet. As yet he is above us, has possession of the air, and the rule of evil spirits; but shortly the children of the kingdom, if buried, shall be raised as Moses; if living and remaining, shall be changed as Elias, and be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, as these representatives of the body of members appeared with him in glory on the mount when he foreshewed his kingdom (Matt. xvi. 28), and power and coming (2 Pet. i. 16), and we are therefore bound, I say, to take courage; yea, and to comfort one another with these and many such words. But his destruction is secured, as by the sealing of the covenant, by the incarnation, and blood-shedding, and death of the Son of God, so far, at least, as the children are concerned; for in Heb. ii. 14, it is written, "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them (give them liberty) who, through fear of death, were all their life-time subject to bondage." Then, Rev. xx. 1, 2, is descriptive of cutting short the work of destroying Satan's works; for the angel of the covenant is to come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit, and bind, and cast him into it; I say, the angel of the covenant, our Jesus, the head of all, shall effect this, even as to destroy his works or workings he was manifested, for He it is who was alive and is dead—and yet, behold He is alive for evermore (Rev. i. 18), and has the *keys* of death and hell. But this destruction of Satan's work, in the air and the earth, and binding him, and the coming of Christ in his power and glory, meet and harmonise with the saints' resurrection: for they that are Christ's (1 Cor. xv. 23), rise at his coming, "and the saints," even the children shall then "possess the kingdom"—the kingdom for which we pray "thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven;" and, as promised by Him who cannot deceive (Dan. vii. 27), "The kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom, under the whole heavens, shall be given to the saints

or the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him." They suffered with Him in the conflict against the enemy, and he being cast out, they reign with Him in his kingdom.

Fourthly, THE END AND RESULT; for the end is at hand, as may be gathered from the remainder of the parable, which we have only time to read, making a passing remark. Verse 39: The harvest is the end of the (Christian) age; and the reapers are the angels; as therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be at the end of this age. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

Now, observe, this kingdom must be on earth, for it is impossible to conceive of things offending, or of persons doing iniquity, in any other kingdom of Christ's, but that which is to be *purified with his presence*, and when his saints shall reign on the earth (Rev. v. 10;) "and then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

This probably is identical with, or nigh unto, the final destruction of Satan, who, after his last struggle (Rev. xx. 14), is cast into the lake of fire "prepared for him and his angels." And when Christ is said (1 Cor. xv. 28) to deliver up the kingdom unto the Father, and when the righteous therefore shine therein, while He in the glory of the Father, reigns for ever—and Jehovah, God, is all in all.

"Who hath ears to hear let him hear." My dear brethren, all of you give ear. My brethren according to the flesh, give ear, I pray you, to the awful truth which has been truly advanced. Whether you receive it or not, it is the truth of God, that so long as you have your standing, without him, and are not partakers of his divine nature, as sown of him, and children of the kingdom, you are the sown of Satan, his children, or his slaves. What an awful consideration! Can you bear it? Will you dare to sleep upon it? O that you may lay it to heart, and that the Lord may shew you mercy! Is it not a time to cry, "Lord Jesus, sow the seed of eternal life in my heart?"

Next, my brethren in the faith, you who have received the holy seed, and are exercising faith in Jesus and studying his word, beware of this great enemy, even Satan, who as a roaring lion is seeking to devour you. Resist him, and he will flee from you—draw near to God, and he will draw near to you, and bless, and preserve

you. And study the word more and more, I beseech you ; study it, to assure yourselves of the final overthrow of Satan, and the glorious triumph of our Lord Jesus Christ. Examine the Greek, if you can, which, for the truth's sake has been given you ; and examine the whole statement, to see if our prospect, and the prospect of the church, be as stated.

Must it not be so for Christ's sake ? Would it be glorious to Christ if otherwise ? If this planet, our world, were to be destroyed, annihilated, would it be glorious to Christ ? Would not this be granting to Satan all he sought for ? Has not destruction been his aim from the beginning ? Is he not the destroyer ? But shall not Christ be glorified in his destruction ? and, Satan and sin being cast out of the world, shall it not be filled with the glory of the Lord, that he may reign for ever and ever ?

The *fire*, whatever the process may be, will no more destroy the earth than did the water ; for the glory and honour of our Lord require that where he suffered he must be glorified, and then the saints, and the earth too, shall enjoy the sabbath that remaineth, and this is what is meant by our prophetic Psalm, " When the people, yea, all the people shall praise Jehovah ;" when " the earth shall yield her increase " (the curse being taken off it), " and God, even our own God, shall give us his blessing." And this is the result of an apostle's reckoning, and the testimony of the Spirit by him (Rom. viii. 17): " If children, then heirs ; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ : if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us ; for the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God ; for the creature (*κτίσις*, the creation) was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature (creation) itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now ; and not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit the redemption of our body."

O blessed and glorious hope ! Lift up your hearts unto the coming king, and when he shall appear he will lift up your heads and give you the kingdom.

THE CHURCH A TESTIMONY FOR GOD TO THE WORLD.

REV. T. BINNEY,

KING'S WEIGH HOUSE CHAPEL, LONDON BRIDGE, SEPTEMBER 11, 1836.

“Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, that I am God.”—ISAIAH, xliii. 12.

THE church, whose internal blessedness is in God—God arising into his rest, dwelling in the midst of his people, giving them gracious promises, and fulfilling their supplications—the church, whose happiness is in God, and its experienced blessedness from him, is under obligation to stand forth to the world as giving a perpetual testimony for God. God expects this; heaven expects it; and earth is to be benefitted by it. God is saying to every Christian church, “Ye are my witnesses that I am God.”

Look for a moment at the context, catch a view of the picture with which these words are connected; and then let us look to the sentiment in relation to ourselves.

The general idea to be gathered from the context is this: God is supposed to be looking down from the throne of his glory on earth, and observing the conduct of men in relation to himself. He sees almost every where that he, the sovereign Lord, is virtually excluded from his own world, that his place is usurped by idols, that all nations are given up to their idolatry, and that he is not acknowledged, not worshipped, not served. He seems to say, “Shall this state of things be allowed to continue? Am I never to be respected? Am I never to have my claims, never to have my due? I will bring this matter to the test: it shall come to a conclusion: I will assemble the whole world; I will call all men to come together to me: I will inquire of the nations that are worshipping idols to produce their evidences, and to stand forth, they who are witnesses, of the deity of these things that they worship; and I will call on my own people to stand forth, and give their testimony for me.” “Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears:” bring forth the blind people that are as though they had no eyes, and the deaf people that are as if they had no ears; that is, all the Gentiles, who, though they have the capacity

of observing in the works of creation the proofs of God's eternal deity, are yet blind. "Let all the nations be gathered, and let the people be assembled: who among them can declare this, and show us former things? let them bring forth their witnesses that they may be justified: or let them hear and say, It is truth. Ye are my witnesses:" I will confront them all with you, with what you know of me, what you have experienced of my goodness, what you understand of my truth, what you have seen of my government and glory: "Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know, and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour. I have declared, and have saved, and I have showed, when there was no strange god among you:" I have given you proofs and evidences of the reality of my existence; ye are therefore my witnesses: I will confront all idolaters with you, and you shall testify that I am God.

There is something very august and imposing about this language of the prophet: and I wish, by a very few observations to-night, to illustrate the idea of the testimony which the Christian church gives to the world, which every Christian man is bound to give, and that he should remember that every day he is giving a testimony, true or false, with respect to God, by his conduct combined with his profession of religion.

God refers in the text to the fact of his having given predictions to his people which had been actually fulfilled; that they knew this, and could testify to it; that he had manifested himself to them in his mode of dealing, in his conduct and government; that he had given them many proofs of his existence and faithfulness; and that these things they could declare. Now the Christian church, considered as a whole, is a perpetual witness on behalf of God, inasmuch as *it has ever been the repository of the sacred documents*—the sacred records which it has preserved and kept, of the existence of prophecies long before the events to which they relate, of which they can bring satisfactory evidence. I merely state this at present, being satisfied of its truth. I mean to say, that the Christian church and the Christian teachers of the church can bring forth satisfactory proof, that such and such particular prophetic writings were in existence, and in the custody of the church, ages before the events to which they relate; and that by the preservation of **these** documents, bringing them forth to the world, and asking the world

to compare the prediction with the fulfilment of the event, it is perpetually giving witness and testimony on God's behalf. So with respect to the *facts* in the history of the church, the miraculous facts, which are so mingled with the ordinary facts in the scripture history, that they cannot be separated or disentangled; we must receive them both or none: the ordinary facts must be received as supported by every concurrent testimony, and the miraculous facts must be received along with them. By producing them to the world, and asking the world to look at them and to study them, the church is standing up as God's witness in the world.

I think the spirit of the observation may be sustained, that Christian churches by the very fact of *their habitually and regularly meeting together*, for divine worship, for the administration of the ordinances of the church, and the preaching of the Gospel, are perpetually presenting a witness or testimony for God. God has thus, in every church and congregation of Christian men habitually assembling together for his worship, so many witnesses to which he can perpetually appeal, which are appealing to the world, and the testimony of which the world is called upon to consider. Every assembly of Christian men, by the fact of their assembling are giving a testimony of God's existence. They meet for religious purposes: all religion has relation to God; the very idea of religion is absurd unless associated with God: and by the very fact of their meeting together they are perpetually delivering a testimony of their conviction of his existence. Assemblies for amusement, meetings of men for scientific objects, do not yield this testimony; but meetings of men for religious purposes do. Two men, for instance, may be passing this place of worship at this moment: they see the light: "What," say they, "are those people doing here?" "It is an assembly of Christians meeting for worship and the service of God." "Then these people believe there is a God: and it is public, so that we are at liberty to observe them; we are at liberty to go and witness their conduct, to mingle with their engagements, and listen to the representations they make." There is thus a perpetual testimony to the world: and who can tell how often this testimony has been heard? The fact of an individual's attention having been casually directed to the simple circumstance of Christians meeting together, may be the means of exciting a train of reflections in his mind, and he may be led to repose in the truth which that testimony refers to.

Such services also give testimony to the advantage and benefit of

religious engagements, and the cognizance that God takes of them; that there is not only a God, not only a Creator and Governor of the world, but that he is observing and noticing the conduct of men, and that men are at liberty to come to him, to present supplications and praises to him, and that it is not a vain thing to wait upon God.

By the ordinances of the church—the preaching of the Gospel, the reading of the lessons of scripture, and the exposition of God's word, there is a perpetual testimony delivered with respect to the nature of religion, the condition of man, the claims of God, the principles on which God and man are to be harmonized and reconciled to each other. In the Lord's supper there seems to be a perpetual testimony with respect to the nature of the atonement, and its reality, the efficacy of the pouring out of the precious blood of Christ, and the necessity of faith, by which we spiritually eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of man. By the exposition of the Scriptures there is a perpetual testimony of the conviction of the individual who delivers this testimony respecting its truth. In a court of justice a witness testifies to his conviction: by the very act of reading the Scriptures and listening to them, we testify to our belief that these are the words of God: and we speak to wise men, and wish them to judge what we say, to receive our testimony and examine for themselves. In the preaching of the Gospel there is set forth the condition of man, his danger and guilt; the manner in which God can be reconciled, the setting forth the great propitiation; the willingness, mercy, benevolence, and compassion of God, in calling on men to be reconciled to him. There is a testimony given to the world by the services of the church with respect to all these principles to which I have referred.

But we will refer to an *individual* Christian man. What a very striking figure is that of the Apostle Paul, when he speaks of Christians being “living epistles;” having inscribed upon them by the finger of God legible characters respecting God's truth, attributes, and so on: living epistles, which are walking about, moving in society, that they may be read and known of all men, and that they may be giving perpetual testimony on behalf of God. A professing Christian man may be viewed in that light. It is a very affecting consideration, and ought deeply to impress our consciences, that by our habitual conduct we are giving a faithful or unfaithful testimony respecting God.

An individual Christian may sometimes be called to give testimony for God *in word*—a private testimony into the ear of a friend,

or, it may be, into the ear of an enemy; for he is to be ready always to give a reason for the hope that is in him, and to do it with meekness and fear. It may, therefore, be sometimes necessary for an individual Christian to deliver, by word, testimony as to the reality of the power and operation of the truth and grace of God. A man may say to him, "What is it you profess? What do you think? What do you suppose to have felt?" "Why, I have felt, handled, tasted, known (as I think), spiritually, so and so. I have received these truths, had the evidence of them laid before my understanding, and I am conscious that I am another man. I know you cannot understand this, because you have not stood on my ground, and have not gone through the moral and spiritual transition which I have; but I am simply delivering to you what I think I have felt under the influence of the Spirit of God; that I have seen my own character in such and such an aspect; I have seen such and such truths presented in the Gospel; I have received them, and have found their advantage and their benefit; I rejoice in the faith of Christ; I feel a repose of mind in his sacrifice, and the joy of God shed abroad in my heart; and I feel that with respect to morals, with respect to conduct, with respect to all the principles by which my conduct is regulated, that I am another man." It may sometimes be necessary for a Christian to give a testimony like this; and blessed is the man who has such a testimony to give for God, who can refer to his own consciousness that once he was blind, and now he sees; and feels that by comparing himself with himself he has become a different creature in the sight of God.

It may be necessary for an individual Christian to be *a witness for God's faithfulness in his promises*. He may be a witness for God as the hearer and the answerer of prayer: he may be able to refer to the happiness which he has experienced, and habitually experiences, in fellowship with God, and the habit of observation that all providences around him are working in connexion with this habitual experience; and to refer to some particular periods when he feels perfectly conscious that the prayers which he offered have been manifestly answered. Men may not believe this, and may despise it: never mind; the individual can say this is his deep conviction as a man before God; and he knows not what influence a calm, simple testimony of that kind may have on those who, at the moment, may even profess to despise it.

So with respect to *the habitual conduct* of the man. The indivi-

dual believer, by mingling with the world day by day—without ever speaking a word about religion, it may be—by what he is, and by what he does, is bearing witness for God. By the holiness that marks the man's life, others may learn something of the holiness of the God whom he serves: by his integrity, by his high appreciation of the great principles of eternal justice, he may learn something of the justice of God: by the benevolence of the man, by the mode and kind of that benevolence, by his yearning anxiety over the souls of men and the moral misery of the species, by the devotion of his abilities to the removal of these, by his benevolent attachment to those great institutions which are intended to diffuse the knowledge of God's word, men may learn something of that God who would have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth: by his superiority to worldly motives and things, and mere sensual gratifications, by his living above the world, by enjoying a blessedness and placidity which worldly men can never penetrate, they may learn something of the spirituality of God, and the blessedness which God can communicate to those whom he makes his own. I consider that many a Christian man, by the consistency of his life, by his moral integrity and justice, by his benevolence, by the purity of his motives and actions, and his separation from the world while in it, without speaking a word about religion, shall yet produce a religious impression, which shall make men think about religion: they will see there is reason in it; and in that reason is a testimony, a witness, for God. Men learn something of God by what they see in his servants.

Let us make one or two general observations suggested by the subject.

In the first place, *what a great, I had almost said, august, duty is that which lies upon the church of God, and upon Christian men individually!* What a grandeur there is about the idea that God, so to speak, has committed his character into our hands! God says to his professing church, "The world lieth in wickedness: the men that love the world are enemies to me; they are all gone after their vanities, their idols, and their covetousness: they have thrust me from my own domain; they refuse me my due. I put my character into your hands; I expect you to stand up and assert my right to reign—assert, by all you do, that I am God, and by showing that I have your hearts, give a testimony that I have a right to every heart. I leave the matter with you; I put myself in your power and hands: stand up; be my witness before the world." There is

something august about this duty, which is an obligation positively binding on the church. It is bringing us into a wonderful resemblance to the Lord Jesus Christ himself. He is termed "the faithful and true witness." While he lived and moved on earth he gave a perfect testimony. He said himself, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." I have given such a representation of God, I am moving about and exhibiting such a view of the character of God, that he that looks on me looks on God. He delivered a testimony, such as we can never deliver; but what a glorious thing it is to be placed, in some measure, side by side with Christ, so to live, that we may give a testimony for God, and appear, as those who are faithful and loyal on his part, against all those who are disloyal and disobedient. We should be animated, methinks, by the grandeur of this duty, by the greatness of the cause, by Him whom we are to serve, by the confidence which he has in us by calling us to this duty; by all these we should be animated to faithfulness.

Let us remember *the very many obstacles, temptations, and dangers* by which we are surrounded with respect to this matter. We are perpetually bribed to give a false evidence, bribed by our own depravity, by indulgence, by shame, by selfishness; bribed by the world, and tempted at times to be frowned down by the opposition of the world, or to be seduced over to the other side by its blandishments. We must be careful, and on our guard against the enemies that are without, and the enemies that are within, that we may be faithful and steadfast in our testimony for God.

Now, brethren, impress also on your minds the guilt of that professing Christian man, who gives by his inconsistencies a *false* witness for God, so that men, looking at it, can see nothing at all of the divine character. They have no testimony as to the divine truth, purity, and rectitude; and they ask, "Is this religion? Am I to judge of the God you profess to serve by yourselves? If so, happy am I that I profess no such thing." How often have men of the world been hardened by witnessing the false testimony which inconsistent Christians give! Now, my dear friends, lay this matter to heart. I would have every one of you ask yourselves very solemnly to-night this question: "The persons with whom I habitually mingle observing the daily current of my habits, conversation, and character—what can they learn, what do they learn, from all that of God?" Supposing a reflective, a thoughtful man, whose mind is frequently dwelling on the great subjects of religion and eternity,

were to live with you for a week, habitually, night and day, observing you for a week, would he learn any thing of God? Would he learn even God's existence? Is there any thing about you, any thing you ever do or say, which would prove to this continual observer that there was a God, that you believed there was one? Would he learn any thing with respect to the character of that God, or the nature of his religion, or what he expects of men, or what he expects his people to do for him? I believe some of you must feel that your habitual character and conduct are such that that individual would learn nothing at all of these great subjects from observing you most closely and accurately. Well, then, are you witnesses for God? No; but you are witnesses against him; you are saying as much as you can, there is no God, and that you have been an infidel, by your whole habitual behaviour; that would be the testimony which you would convey. Now this is a serious consideration: lay it to heart; and may all now in the presence of God to whom this remark applies, be led to serious consideration and prayer!

What would be the consequence of an universal faithful testimony in the church on behalf of God—an universal faithful testimony to the world by the church connectedly and individually? O the consequences would be great and blessed indeed! Our Lord has referred to it in his intercessory prayer for the church, when he prayed that they all might be one, that the world might believe in the divinity of himself, his mission, and his religion. But by the distractions, and the separations, the coldness, the indifference, and the hostility between church and church, and between Christian and Christian, there is a broken, distorted, false testimony given to the world of the loveliness and beauty of our faith; and the world cannot, therefore, receive the testimony which the church ought to give with respect to the nature of religion, because there is altogether a defect in its presentation. If there is, therefore, to be a union and a communion, a real and actual fellowship among all who hold the Head, there is then a public open testimony to the world of the reality and power of our faith, which will produce an impression on the world. So in respect to the exhibition of the truth in every way, and the holiness and zeal of individual Christians.

The world not only does not believe us, but does not believe that we ourselves believe what we say: on account of the inconsistencies of many of us, they not only reject and deny what we say, but say

that we ourselves do not believe it. I remember a very striking circumstance which a neighbouring minister mentioned to me in proof of this. There was in the town in which he preached a determined and avowed infidel, believing in neither Christianity nor God. He saw this man one Sunday evening in the place of worship. He was preaching on some of the great verities of the faith, and the duties resulting therefrom. As he was the next morning passing the door of the man, he was standing at it. He said, "I saw you at worship last night, and was rather surprised to see you there, because you don't believe what I was saying." "No," says he, "nor you either." "Indeed!" "No. Why, if I were to believe" (he went on to say), "if I were to believe the things you affirm to be true, which you set forth, and which are written in your books, I should not know how to contain myself; I should feel their importance so much that I should exhibit them wherever I went; I should not know how to hold in the enthusiasm which they would excite. But I don't believe them, nor do you, or you would be very different people from what you are." This infidel said to the minister of God, to his face, that there was such a defect about the conduct and consistency of Christians that led him to think they did not themselves believe the testimony which they gave. Well, then, if there was real, downright consistency of conduct and character in the church, what an influence it would have on the general belief of the world, by persuading the world of our own sincerity, and thus lead them to a more serious consideration of the duties we have adverted to.

Let us dwell for a moment on *the reward which awaits the individual who gives a faithful testimony for God*. There is a reward in the present world: the individual who consistently and faithfully testifies for God, has the privilege of mourning if the church be depressed in her fortunes and character. He has "delivered his soul;" he has given his testimony; and if the church is in darkness and sorrow, in persecution and oppression, it is his privilege to be permitted to mourn. If he had not given his testimony for God faithfully, that would not have been his privilege; and if he mourned over the ashes and depression of Zion, God would say to him, "Be silent; thou hast been silent with respect to testimony for me; and now be silent with respect to the condition of my church: thou shalt not have the privilege to mourn; thy silence, which was before thy guilt, let it be thy duty and thy punishment." So the Christian might be permitted to rejoice and to celebrate the

triumphs of the church, if the church were successful, because his testimony would have contributed, in some measure, to that; and at the day of judgment he will be recognized before men and angels as a good and faithful servant and witness, and would enter into the joy of his Lord. And when the cause of God triumphs (for it will triumph: God will not always be excluded from his rights and dominion; he will assert those rights, and will reign), then he will be permitted to share that triumph, and to participate in the reign.

One word, in conclusion, with respect to *the character, the duty, and the doom, of those who render this testimony of the church necessary*: I mean all sinful, unbelieving, worldly, impenitent men. Your character is, opposers of God, deniers of God; refusing his claims and his rights, and expelling him from the very earth that he has made. Your *duty* is, immediately to receive the testimony given by the church; to be led by it to examine the record, to see the foundation upon which the church rests, and the hope and blessedness which the church enjoys; to repent and to believe the Gospel; to unite yourselves to the church; to come forth to the world and give your testimony against your present associates, by telling them you have seen your error, your delusion, your guilt, and rejoice in having passed from that darkness into God's marvellous light. It is your *duty* to receive the Gospel, and to receive the church's testimony respecting its truth; and if you do not do this—if you remain opposers of God, impenitent, unbelieving, unaffected by a sense of your guilt and danger, unaffected by the exceeding mercies of God, unaffected by his exhortations and beseechings that you would be reconciled to him, unaffected by the testimony given in every Christian assembly, and by every Christian man, then your *doom* will be, that God will triumph over you; his cause will triumph against you; and he will glorify himself, his own power, and his own justice, in your eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. God forbid that this shall be the case with any of us! Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish from the way: take hold of his strength, and so make peace with him. Receive the testimony which God has given, and which the church is perpetually presenting: thus accept the mercy, and take the blessing, which in the Gospel is provided. Stand forth, testifying to the ungodly world what you have found, and what they have lost; and thus rejoice in living to the glory of God. Amen.

THE BEATITUDES—EVIDENCES OF POVERTY OF SPIRIT.

REV. J. RUDGE, D.D.

ST. SEPULCHRE'S CHURCH, SNOW HILL, NOVEMBER 21, 1824.

Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."—MATTHEW, v. 3.

IN the two preceding Sermons on this beatitude, I have explained its true nature and character, and have analyzed that heavenly temper of mind, and disposition of soul, to which the gracious promise of the kingdom of heaven has been annexed by our blessed Lord. The present exercise will be devoted to a consideration of the marks, or signs, by which all may be able to ascertain, whether they possess this grace, or beatitude, of our holy religion.

Continue, we beseech thee, O God, to assist us in these exercises; and as nothing is holy, nothing is rich, without thee, so, in a proper humility of spirit, we implore thee to vouchsafe the dews of thy grace, that the word preached may be fructified and enriched to thy glory and to our good!

Why the divine preacher began his sermon with pronouncing a blessing on poverty of spirit, rather than on any of the other graces, may thus be explained. Poverty of spirit is the basis and foundation of all the other graces which he afterwards enumerates, and on which he pronounces the other beatitudes. Without it they could have no existence or efficacy. It is, then, the root of all religion. It is the acorn, from which the sturdy and most magnificent oak of the forest ariseth. It is the seed which gives the magnificent product of all that God delighteth to behold in the temper and conduct of his creatures. Without poverty of spirit, which gives to a man a sight of his sinful deformities, how could he mourn for his crimes, and apply to his Saviour for that healing power, and hardening mercy, with which he is ever ready to absolve and purify the heavy laden sinner, and the deeply polluted criminal? Without poverty of spirit, which makes a man sensible of his want of holiness, how can he "hunger and thirst after righteousness?" This poverty of

spirit, then, being the chief and most indispensable of these graces, our Lord hath placed it first; and after having laid it like a skilful architect as the first stone in the building, he then adverts to the other ornaments of the beauteous and polished Christian temple, and enumerates the other decorations and “corners” with which the Christian soul is to be strengthened and embellished!

One sure sign of that blessed poverty of spirit is a *diffidence*; *yea, such a humbling opinion of our own selves*, that like David, “our souls are even as a weaned child.” Though content with our worldly circumstances, though satisfied with the lot in which we have been placed by a wise and gracious providence, yet, if there be one drawback on the contentment of our minds, and the resignation of our souls, it is, that our spiritual attainments are not greater, that our graces are not more abundant, and our progress in Christian perfection and holiness more apparent.

Now permit me to ask, is this your case? Do you ever in a meek and rational spirit thus commune with your hearts, and languish under the sense of your besetting infirmities; of vows frequently violated, of resolutions not always realized, and of virtues not always carried on to perfection; yet, notwithstanding, do you strive against sin, and if you do not always bear the laurels of victory, do you so run as to deserve, in humble dependence on Christ, to obtain them? Then permit me to assure you, you have no cause for alarm. You are not far from the kingdom of heaven, not far from the prize of your high calling in Christ Jesus, not far from that beatitude of religion, which is the comfort, the hope, the blessing only of the poor in spirit. Furthermore, your diffidence is the sign by which you may ascertain that this invaluable blessing is yours in reality; for absolute perfection is not within the grasp and attainment of any human being in his present state of imperfection, though the progress towards it should be the every-day endeavour of man even with his present limited powers. And here I am reminded of that beautiful passage of the accomplished Addison, in which, speaking of a subject, upon which he says he always meditated with great delight, the immortality of the soul, he observes, that considered with its Creator, the soul is like one of those mathematical lines that may draw nearer to another for all eternity without a possibility of touching it: and can there be a thought so transporting as to consider ourselves in these perpetual approaches to him, who is not only the standard of perfection, but of happiness! The man by whom this progress is continually

made, is, of all created beings, the most likely to bewail the hardness of his heart, the coldness of his love, and the blackness of his ingratitude, and with the poor publican to strike his breast, and pray to God to be merciful to him as a sinner. But the case of the hypocrite is widely different. Every view which he takes of his condition corresponds exactly with the feelings of the Pharisee. He is perfectly satisfied with his own goodness, and boasts of his own attainments; and in the same proportion as he looks with disdain upon the pretensions of others, he regards his own claims to be accounted righteous as fully established in his own sight. He is as loud in commendation of himself as he is in reprobation of others.

How alien from this unsound and unwholesome state of mind is that of the "poor in spirit!" Are any of the riches of this world denied him? Is his worldly condition lowly? Are his temporal prospects disheartening? Is the aspect of every thing around him sad and cheerless? And are his own enemies even those of his own household? To his other worldly misfortunes, is that of domestic strife and family discord to be added? Is it the bitter portion of a parent to know what a daughter's shame and the heartless conduct of a reprobate son meaneth? These are, indeed, the worst of human ills, the very bitterest gall and wormwood that parental experience can know, that can empoison the streams of parental endearment, and make the grey hairs of an aged father or mother to descend with sorrow to the grave! But even here the influence of this divine beatitude is felt; and not a murmur escapes the lips of him in whom this heavenly temper dwelleth. He is full of resignation to the divine will; and, notwithstanding his "tribulation," what our Lord said of the church at Smyrna may be applied, with truth, to him, that he is "rich"—rich in the consolations of God, and in the comfort, that though his afflictions may endure for a season, the joys of eternity will succeed to the sorrows of time, and he will be amply recompensed by the glorious prize of the kingdom of heaven in the morning of the resurrection. If he complains, it is only that this mind has not been sufficiently formed, and this view has not been sufficiently cherished, heretofore, within him. He prays, therefore, daily for grace, that its stock may be increased, and that the lamp may hourly be replenished with fresh oil: and his best endeavours are so to trim his lamp that it may ever burn in a bright and enduring flame. But why should you breathe this complaint, my Christian friends? Is it because your

graces are so few, and your progress in holiness so small? If this be the case, then, be of good cheer. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid; for know ye, "There is that maketh himself poor, yet hath many riches!" Many there are of the glorious fellowship of saints militant on earth—hereafter, we humbly hope, to be triumphant in heaven—who, during their earthly pilgrimage, have lain as humble beggars at the door of mercy, subsisted wholly on the alms of free grace, and yet have died possessed of great riches, rich in faith, rich in all the graces of the Spirit, and heirs of the heavenly kingdom. Like Lazarus, destitute of this world's wealth and conveniences, yet rich in the approbation of God, and in the blessed anticipation of enjoying the bosom of Abraham, and the felicities of angels in glory.

The man who is poor in spirit is of a *meek and quiet mind*; lowly in heart, and esteeming others better than himself. He sees excellences in others, but deformities in himself. Hence his chief solicitude, is to pluck out the mote that is in his own eyes, and to cast from him the vileness that is in his own heart. His loathing is, respecting his own corrupt and diseased nature; and with Job he is ready to exclaim, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." And, however strange it may appear, the fact is certain, that his humility is in the exact ratio to the excellency of his graces, and the multitude of his virtues, in other words, the higher his attainments, the deeper his humility; and the more he acts up to the elevated and hallowed character of a saint, the more prompt and sincere is his confession, that he is the chief of sinners, not, I mean, in the canting phraseology of the term, but in true meekness and sincerity of soul. If there be any good thing in him—any distinguishing grace or particular excellency, he vaunts it not forth in the ears of the people, or in the public assemblies of the multitude, to win their transient applause, and attract their wondering gaze: no, no; in the silent and acceptable oratory of his heart, he blesses the giver of the gift, and prays that it may alone be a means of grace to himself, and an instrument of usefulness to others, in turning himself and many from the vanities of time to the things of God and eternity. Does he perform any acceptable service, and discharge any important duty? He acknowledges that the strength by which he was enabled to do the one and the other, is not his own, but Christ's that strengthened him. When he examines his own graces, it is with no feeling of proud and lofty exultation, but with a meek and candid admission that they are so deficient in cha

racter, and so disproportioned in quality. He arrogates to himself no merit on account of his best doings and most signal services to God and his fellow-creatures ; but in the view of them, he confesses, as enjoined by his alone meritorious Lord and Master, that he is but an unprofitable servant, and has done only what it was his bounden duty to do. He labours, he strives for higher attainments ; yet not he, but the grace of God which is in him. He liveth, yet not he, but Christ that liveth in him. He prays, he pleads for more plentiful supplies of grace, and for more conformity in life and temper to that divine Head, from whom the spiritual machinery derives all its being and strength, and in whom, by the Spirit, all his members move in beauteous order, and with admirable consistency. He is continually knocking at heaven's gate ; and with sighs, and tears, and groans, which cannot be uttered, importuning for the alms of charity, and suing for the beatitudes of religion ; nor does he cease until, like the poor supplicants in the Gospel, he has moved the compassion of David's son, and the portals have been opened for his admission to the mercy and bounty of his Lord and Saviour. Now, let me ask, my orethren, whether you have these signs and marks, by which you can identify yourselves as " the poor in spirit ?"

Another sure and infallible evidence of your having attained to this divine and indispensable temper of mind is this: *Is the Lord Jesus Christ precious to you ?* Do you feel how suitable the Saviour is to supply your every want, to cure your every wound, and to pardon your every sin ? And hence do your hearts overflow with gratitude, with love, and with adoration ; and is the " chosen of God," in the mightiness of his undertakings, the splendour of his miracles, the mercies of his salvation, and in the power and glories of his resurrection, precious to your views, and the " elect" of your souls ? He, who is poor in spirit, knows, as the Church of Laodicea was admonished by the great preacher of truth, that he is " wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Hence he goes to Christ to have his wretchedness removed, his misery relieved, his poverty made rich, the eyes of his understanding opened, and the shame of his nakedness covered. He feels his soul pining through hunger, and dying through thirst, and he hastens to Christ, who is represented in the Scriptures of truth, under the elegant similitudes of bread and water, of which whosoever eateth and drinketh, he shall never hunger nor thirst. By the bread is signified his body, and by the water his blood, of which, whosoever is weary

and heavy laden, and who knows wherein his true happiness and duty consist, he will never refuse to partake, in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper for the nourishment of his body, and the refreshment of his soul. He perceives that his wounds are mortal, and his application is directed to Him whom the Scriptures describe as the Physician of the soul. And why is this description given, but for our good and instruction, and to teach us that, in the failure of all earthly applications for corporeal relief, here is one whose prescriptions never fail to cure the more inveterate and desperate maladies of the soul? The day of visitation must and will come to all of you; and then will the force of this great truth be pressed upon your acceptance: and in the blasting of your strength, and the ruin and disorganization of your corporeal machine, the loosening of the silver cord, and the breaking of the golden bowl of these corruptible bodies of yours, your minister will have to expatiate upon the virtues and efficacy of the Redeemer's medicines, that they never fail to reanimate and invigorate the soul in the dreariest season of her languishment and ailing, that for every mortal wound there is an efficacious cure, a reviving cordial, a healing balm, and that one leaf even plucked from the tree of life, affords a sovereign remedy and a successful medicine, however inveterate your disease and malignant your sins. In a strictly scriptural sense, it may be said, that he bathes in his Saviour's blood, is clothed in his Saviour's robe, and convinced that in him all fulness dwells; he seeks to find in him, "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption."

Being thus fully persuaded, that all the riches of grace and glory, that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, are to be found in Christ, the "poor in spirit" *is willing to receive him on the terms in which he is presented in the Scriptures.* And this is a point of infinite importance to be considered. If, then, the New Testament be truth, and not a cunningly-devised fable, which it is the delirium of the human intellect to think, we must thus conclude. Without Christ, in whom are all our strength and sufficiency, we are lost and undone. Our solicitude, therefore, will be to accept of him in simplicity and sincerity of soul, not standing on this or that point, as is the case with the proud sinner, but submitting to him wholly as our Prince, and receiving him heartily as our Saviour. I observe, that this we shall do unreservedly if we be poor in spirit; we shall deem no work too hard, no sacrifice too great, in order to win Christ. There is not a besetting sin, to which we are addicted, which we shall not renounce; there is not a beloved lust, to which

we are prone, which we shall not abjure, for Christ's sake, and for the Gospel's. In a mind thus enlightened and informed by scriptural truth, nothing will be put in competition with duty; and instantaneously will the sacrifice be made, though we should sustain the loss of what is as dear to us as a right eye, or valuable as a right hand. There will be no compromise with sin, no alliance with Belial, no treaty with the prince of this world. We must divorce ourselves from every bad habit and criminal indulgence; cut them off, pluck them out, and nail them to that accursed thing whereon the Redeemer bore his bitter passion, and poured out his righteous soul! Yea, like Peter, we shall not hesitate to adventure ourselves upon the tempestuous sea, so that we may go to Christ; and of this we may be assured, that, however boisterous may be the winds to which we are exposed in this world, we shall not sink, if our courage fail not, our faith wax not faint, nor our Christian principles desert us in the hour of peril, and in the season of temptation!

There is another mark, or sign, of this blessed poverty of spirit, to which I shall, lastly, advert. Those by whom it is possessed are *invariably thankful*. Like the poor leper, who returned to give thanks to God after the cure that had been wrought, their hearts are always attuned to the song of gratitude, and their tongues are incessantly occupied in magnifying the praises and mercies of God, particularly that astonishing display of his goodness, the gift of a Saviour, mighty and willing to save. He who believes himself to be in extreme indigence, will be grateful even for the smallest favours conferred. This we find verified in the Apostle of the Gentiles. He no sooner tasted mercy, than he thus expressed himself: "The grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant;" and, having been a vessel of mercy himself, in all his writings he speaks of it with rapture, and exalts, in the highest strains of a grateful soul, that free and sovereign grace, of which he was so singular a monument. Nor shall we, if we possess the heavenly grace and temper of which I have been so solicitous to press the nature and importance on the minds of all of you, be behind the Apostle in the fervour of our gratitude, and in the intensity of our love, to Almighty God for the inestimable gift of a Saviour, by which the means of grace have been vouchsafed, the hope of glory has been given, and the kingdom of heaven has been opened, to all believers!

"Humility of soul is a noble poverty," saith one of the fathers (Austin). It renders those who possess it persons of rank and eminence in the eyes of God, and is the true nobility which obtains

in the courts of the great king. Moses was a distinguished example of it, who was great in the sight of God in nothing more than in his possessing poorness of spirit, and in his preferring the poverty and affliction of the people of God before the treasures in Egypt, and the honours and distinctions of Pharaoh's court. In a word, the lower we abase ourselves in our own sight, the higher we are exalted in the approbation of God. Humility is not only the surest road to the honours and distinctions of eternity, but, as it respects ourselves in our present walk and pilgrimage to heaven, it is the road also to peace and comfort, to that which beguiles the tedium of the journey in the wilderness, which diminishes much of its difficulties, and reconciles us greatly to its privations and wants! The world is an inn, of which the accommodations are few in number, and despicable in quality; and think with what contentment we shall put up with them; what calmness and serenity will pervade our souls, if, with Moses, we bear in mind the end of our pilgrimage, and respect only the recompense of the reward; and what perfect resignation will possess our minds if we cast all our cares upon Christ, and rest only upon him, whose staff will support, whose spirit will guide, and whose consolations will cheer us, as we journey on to that heavenly Canaan, where are pleasures for evermore, and satisfactions which will ever last, for the people of God! Though conscious of our own meanness, and sensible of our own wants, our comforts will be in some such pleasing reflections as these: I am poor, but the Lord careth for me; I am in indigence and want, but in Christ "all fulness dwells;" and my God will be a very present help in my necessities, and supply all my need, according to his "riches in glory!" I am sinful and unworthy; but my Redeemer is righteous and altogether precious. With a sense of his love and acceptance, I am now blessed on earth, and, according to his gracious promise, shall be superlatively blessed with him hereafter; for to such as are thus "poor in spirit" pertains the "kingdom of heaven!" "Blessed, therefore, are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven!"

GOD'S GOODNESS RECALLED TO MIND.

HON. AND REV. B. W. NOEL, A.M.

ST. JOHN'S CHAPEL, BEDFORD ROW, AUGUST 28, 1836.

“ But I said, How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations? And I said, Thou shalt call me, My father; and shalt not turn away from me.”—JEREMIAH, iii. 19.

IN the earlier part of this chapter we find the Lord complaining of the backsliding and treachery both of Judah and Israel, especially Judah; and yet combined with this was a promise that he should be at last restored; that an elect remnant should be restored to Zion, after they were scattered among the nations. It was further prophesied that they should increase and multiply in the land, as we know from their history they did; and further, that the house of Judah should walk with the house of Israel; that the ten tribes should be restored to their own land; which I believe took place on the return of the Jews from Babylon: and then it was said further, that “they should say no more, The ark of the covenant of the LORD: neither shall it come to mind: neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done any more;” that is, after that multiplication of the nation, the Saviour should come, and a new series of mercies should be to them the praise of all the believers in the nation; it was when they “multiplied the nation, and increased the joy,” as the prophet Isaiah says, at the coming of the Saviour, that they were no longer to recal former mercies bestowed on their nation, as much richer blessings from that time should call forth the united praises of all the believers among the re-assembled tribes of Israel. It was further prophesied, “At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem;” that is, if I understand the prophet rightly, an elect remnant of the two nations, those who were God’s spiritual Israel, should become the foundation of the universal church, and all the nations should be gathered to that apostolical church, which was especially termed *Zion*, because its first seat was at Jerusalem.

But in the anticipation of these great promises, that not only were the ten tribes to be restored with the two from their captivity, but that the Gentiles should be added to this spiritual Israel, the Lord, considering the greatness of the blessings and the rebellion of the people, says, "How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations?" They were to be scattered among the nations; how should they again be dealt with as the children of God? "How shall I give thee a pleasant land?"—restore thee to that land which thou hast forfeited. And further than this—for this was only the antecedent and introductory mercy, the recovery of their own land—"How shall I give thee a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations?" making the nations become the delight of the church, and adding to her, as the heritage of his spiritual and elect people, "a goodly (elect) heritage of the hosts of nations:" a promise not clearly fulfilled to its utmost extent yet, but fulfilled far beyond the expectation of the most sanguine believers then, by the vast numbers that have been added to the church through grace.

"And I said, Thou shalt call me, My father, and shalt not turn away from me." This answer determines the method which the Lord would take to fulfil these great blessings to his spiritual Israel, to those to whom the spiritual promises were exclusively made; that is, to them, and that host of nations that should be added to them, as the true Israel of God, and for whom, I apprehend, nearly all, if not all, the spiritual promises of the Old Testament are primarily, properly, and exclusively intended. It declares, in other words, the spirit of Gospel religion: these prophecies, with reference to Christianity, shall be fulfilled to that elect remnant in this manner. "Thou shalt call me, My father, and shalt not turn away from me:" that is, the church in general, and therefore each individual member of that church, shall be led to look on the Lord God as his father, and, having obtained this filial spirit, should never again lose it.

In examining this passage, I do not so much desire to bring before you any truths with which you are not familiar, or to prove that which your own minds have often fed upon as ascertained truth; but rather to recall it as that which may furnish subject for much profitable meditation and examination to us all. And, permitted in the good providence of God again to find myself among you, I desire to exercise my own heart, and yours, by recalling the extreme goodness of God in thus having brought us, if indeed we are true believers, into this marvellous relation to himself, the great and glorious majesty

of the universe, that we may call him our Father, and believe in the permanence of the relation and the spirit he has communicated.

The first point brought before us is, **THE CHARACTER OF TRUE RELIGION**: "Thou shalt call me, My father." It was in this way that those who were under bondage among the Jews became his spiritual people: it was in this way that every Gentile sinner, and every sinner in our own day, must come to God: "Thou shalt call me, My father." Every false religion, and every corruption of the true, is characterized by a spirit of bondage: I never met with any account of a false religion of which this was not obviously and undeniably the characteristic. All religions but that of Christ, and every corruption of this religion, every thing that is not true religion, is characterized by the fear of God rather than by love, by a servile rather than a filial spirit, by the spirit of a slave, and not of a child. False religion has never yet taught men to love their Creator, and seldom has proposed it as a point at which to aim. But the character of God's religion, of that which alone deserves the name of religion, is, "Thou shalt call me, My father." It is not the spirit of irreverence and contempt, but that of reverence: it is not the spirit of alienation and ingratitude, but that of affection and delight: it is not the spirit of distrust and doubt, but of obedience and hope. This is the very spirit which the Lord would have all his people cherish, and which he communicates to those who are true believers. "Thou shalt call me, My father." A child should look with reverential regard on his parent, as well as affection; and when a sinner is taught to call God his father, there is a disposition to admire his perfections that previously was not known. Before, he could sin, as far as he dare, with impunity; he would sin to the utmost, as far as he hoped to be able to escape the punishment attached to sin. But when a man has learned to call God his father, then it is the full and firm purpose of his heart to do the will of his father, to keep his laws, and to honour his name.

It is the spirit of gratitude instead of alienation. Before a man is brought by grace to love the Lord, there is nothing in his heart but alienation from God, as revealed in the Scriptures; but this must fully pass away before the man is the subject of true religion. As long as the creature is alienated from the Creator, can he be his son, his heir? Can he be on his way to share in the glory which God gives to his redeemed ones in another world? "'Thou shalt call me, My father:" thou must have a feeling of gratitude and

delight in me before thou sharest in the glory which my children shall receive. It is the spirit of the Christian to rejoice in the goodness and power and wisdom of God, in conjunction with his promises. Has not God taught us to take pleasure in his gracious promises, to look on them with thankfulness as our own, to trace them to his sovereign compassion, to realize every blessing as springing from his bounty as the token of his love? Is it not sweet to see God reconciled to us in Christ, and communicating to us every moment the enjoyment of every blessing by the way, as a pledge of higher blessings included in the covenant of grace, all of which are promised, if we are his children? This, and this only, is piety: and if any one here has not attained to any thing more than the spirit of a slave, the dread of punishment, the desire to escape it, or the wish to obtain personal reward; if this is all a man has attained, has he ever said, "Abba, Father!" has he ever been brought into that relation to God which all believers enjoy, and of which the proper fruit is the assurance and the joy that come from God? Of all Christians Paul says, "Therefore thou art no more a slave, but a son." If we are on our way to heaven, we are no more servants, but sons; he has brought us into the relation of those whom he provides for, and whom he will eternally bless.

In some sense, the term applied to God as the Universal Parent of Mankind, is not to be blamed; but if it is to be meant to extend thus far, that he looks with regard on all his creatures as the objects of his favour, they who make use of such expressions do err, not knowing the Scriptures; the language of Scripture is, that till this great change pass on us, which the Lord Jesus said must pass on all before they can enter the kingdom of heaven, we are slaves and not sons; we are not brought back to a reconciled father; or, to remove the figure, instead of being the objects of the favour of God, we are the objects of his malediction, obliged to obey the law under the penalty of being punished for every transgression, but having no interest in his favour, no promise of his love. But when a man is changed by grace, he is no more a servant, but a son; he is brought into this relation, and rejoices in proportion to the grace given to him, in the consciousness and assurance of his eternal happiness.

This leads me to consider the MODE IN WHICH THIS CHANGE HAS BEEN EFFECTED, "I said, Thou shalt call me, My father." Religion is the love of a child to a father felt by the believer towards

God. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind," in the very essence of piety, and to accomplish which the Lord Jesus Christ came into our world. Now how is this to be effected? How shall the slave be changed into a child—the spirit of bondage into the spirit of a son? "I said, Thou shalt call me, My father." Two things were obviously necessary. It was necessary that faith should come into the relation itself; and no change in the disposition could have effected the change in the relation. The child must be in the relation itself antecedent to the change in the feeling of our mind. "Thou shalt call me, My father." This implied that this people should be brought into the relation of his children, as well as enjoying their spirit. Paul has told us (if indeed it be necessary to cite any passage in illustration of it), that the Jews were in bondage under the elements of the world; but "when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." The Jew, then, as well as the Gentile convert, was, anterior to faith in the Lord Jesus, a bond-slave rather than a son; and though he inherited the privileges of a Jew, and was a member of a nation in covenant nationally with God, yet he was in bondage under the elements of the world; and it was only by redemption made known to him in the Gospel, that he could receive the adoption of a son. Christ came to redeem them that were under the law. We, as well as the Jews, are under the law; that is, bound to obey the whole of the moral law—bound to fulfil all its precepts, and abide by all its sanctions; and thus to be in bondage until redemption by Christ Jesus brings us back to the relation of children.

"Thou shalt call me, My father." This does not express, I apprehend, the change of the spirit and temper, but the change of relation, in making us really children, whereas before we were exposed to the divine displeasure. When the Lord promises by his prophet, "Thou shalt call me, My father," he indeed promises that he would bring them into this relation by bringing them a Saviour. "You shall have the Son of my love to bring me back to my favour, to make you as my children." The change in that relation we owe exclusively to the sovereign love of God; we owe it to that faithful, patient, unparalleled kindness wherewith our Lord condescended to suffer in our room, and to "bear our sins in his own body on the tree."

Yet this was not sufficient to bring us back to fulfil this great

promise. A change in the disposition is promised when it is said, "Thou shalt call me, My father;" as surely as God has declared it, which is an unalterable truth, so surely must this change be effected in the dispositions of those whom he would bring to himself. For this it was necessary that the cross should be *exhibited to us*; that Christ Jesus should die, and his death be made known to us; that we should be told and assured, as God thus unequivocally assures us, that of his having accepted that atonement in our room. And then, finally, all these powerful motives to reverence and gratitude must be rendered effectual *by the operation of his Spirit on our hearts*. "Ye are the children of God," says the apostle, "by faith in Christ Jesus." Now that faith is itself the communication of God's love: he of himself has bestowed it, if we are believers, and receive the truth as it is in Jesus. But after having made us his children by faith in Christ, we must receive the spirit of children; we must overcome that disposition to self-righteousness, that distrust of our God, which are wholly at variance with the spirit of children. Therefore when the apostle says we are "justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus;" he adds, "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." The relation must be bestowed first, or the spirit could not be enjoyed. How could we look on God our Father, if we knew him to be angry with us, and ourselves exposed to his eternal displeasure? But it was his will to effect a change in the relation first; to make us his children through faith in the Lord Jesus, and then to send forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba, Father." He has not left his work incomplete; he has abundantly fulfilled to each one of his children this gracious promise, "Thou shalt call me, My father." Indifference, alienation, and distrust, are progressively and successively swept away; his people are brought to desire his favour beyond all things; divine grace unites them to their father in heaven, in a manner which before they conceived not to be possible; and they are brought to that peaceful relation, by his goodness and power and care, which is the peculiar felicity of God's own children. "I said, Thou shalt call me, My father."

This gracious promise contains still another clause, which is necessary to your comfort, and which completes the manifestation of God's goodness: "And thou shalt not turn away from me." If our first parents were placed, in some respects, in more favourable cir-

cumstances than we are, inasmuch as they had no temptations to struggle with as we have, and were surrounded with all that might induce them to continue faithful to God—if they fell from their steadfastness through that strange introduction of temptation into his heart, it was far more likely that we, even we, having known and loved God, and rejoiced in the salvation he has provided for us in Christ—that each of us, misled by some transient and seducing object, have turned away from him who is our God, should have forsaken the fountain of living waters to hew out to ourselves cisterns that would not hold the consolation that we hoped. But He who gave us a Saviour, He who gave us his Spirit to induce us to appreciate his love, would never again lead us to self-destruction. It had been much if our gracious God, having brought us into covenant with himself, had declared, “You shall never perish; you shall never die.” It would have been a vast mercy to tell us that we should eventually rise to glory if we became the members of his living body. But God in this promise has done far more; he does not say to his people, “Ye shall not die,” but, “You shall not turn away from me;” by this securing a double blessing—the continuance of a right principle, as well as the continuance of a state of safety.

They must have given little heed to the constant language of God's word who can find in this doctrine of the perseverance of God's saints—which should be rather called *the perseverance of the love of God*—they must have looked with little carefulness to the various statements made in God's word, if they find occasion there to imagine that his people could live in transgression, could continue careless, could grow hard in heart, and yet hope to be eventually happy. The promise is not that you shall be saved while living in disobedience, but “Thou shalt not turn away from me;” and it was as easy to our covenant God to secure the one as the other. It could not enter into his councils that an unholy being should be happy, whatever his previous experience: and as sure as Adam, once holy and rejoicing in the favour of God, became a miserable and abject being, cast off from his favour, and the heir to eternal wrath, when he chose to seek a false happiness, contrary to the will of God; so surely shall all who have been bought by the blood of Christ, changed by the grace of the Spirit, and made to love God with a spiritual affection that should grow on till they loved God perhaps better than Adam loved him—so surely would they, each and all, have turned from every manifestation of his grace, if left to themselves. But it was the completeness of the love of God that he would maintain the

principle once implanted ; and there is not in all the works of God any thing that seems to me so great, so godlike, so passing all the bounds of language to express its worth and majesty, as that the Lord God should take the poor crushed spirit, that was bound down by sin, while unrestored to its lost perfections, exposed to all manner of solicitations to depart from God, and enable him to live on still obedient to his will, growing in gratitude where almost all are alienated, growing on in devotedness where almost all are disobedient, and looking on to the eternal reward where the hearts of all around him, and his own naturally, are inclined to be fastened to the things of time, and limited to the short interests on this side the grave. The ship is kept secure in the midst of the ocean ; the taper is kept alive in the midst of the storm ; still it burns brighter and brighter, till it is assimilated to the lustre of that love which fills angelic breasts, and shall glow on in the presence of God to all eternity. "Thou shalt not turn away from me." Not, "Thou shalt be happy in sin, in levity, in pride, and in disregard of my will : " no, "Thou shalt be diligent in duty, firm in temptation, mortifying self-will, living alone amidst wicked men : thou shalt dare to be singular in an evil world : thou shalt examine earnestly that thou solicitously pursuest all the known precepts of my word : thou shalt live by the word of God, when others live by the rule of fancy ; thou shalt call me, My father, when all men are alienated from me : thou shalt live a spiritual and heavenly life in the midst of earthly corruptions, and among those who are devoted to time." This is contained in the blessed promise, "Thou shalt call me, My father, and shalt not turn away from me." The grace of God, which secures our eternal happiness, secures our eternal principle too ; and when his people depart from him (as, alas ! depart they may), he lacks not the means, as he certainly lacks not the inclination, of bringing them back, and they are chastened back to their duty. They feel an uneasiness and a restlessness in departing from God ; he sends them affliction on affliction ; he drives the arrow of conviction deep into their hearts ; he makes his precious promises to beam on them ; and he suffers not his erring child to find any happiness, till, brought back to his God, he says, with gratitude unspeakable, as the Psalmist of old, "He restoreth my soul : he leads me into the paths of righteousness, for his name's sake."

This blessed promise is not given to one of God's children, but to all : it was the language addressed to his church at the beginning, and is meant to be their consolation through all days ; your experience and mine, if we are believers in Jesus, and know anything

of that love which passeth knowledge. I address you to-day as the followers of Christ. Have you not a song of thanksgiving to Him who has granted you this unspeakable mercy? And if he has done it at the cost of the death of his only Son, and with the unspeakable condescension of the Spirit of God inhabiting your hearts as a lowly temple; and if he has led you to say with confidence, "My father, my father," O what gratitude ought to be ours! How ought we to spend our lives in honouring and glorifying God! How ought His law to be written on our hearts who has done such wondrous things for those who would have fallen finally, as well as fully, if the Lord Jesus had not redeemed us from our sins, and the Spirit of his love taught us to appreciate that redemption!

Let me impress on your hearts and my own, that since religion consists so peculiarly in this filial spirit, we must cherish that spirit in our hearts from day to day. Have we, since we last assembled all of us together for worship—have we, since it was last my privilege to address you, been cherishing this spirit of children towards God? Ten thousand blessings have been poured out on the least happy among you; have you traced them all to God? Have those who have been favoured with many mercies blessed God that he has given them these mercies in Christ? Did you, for the nearness of the relation into which he brought you, love him more and more? Have these weeks of absence been spent in the spirit of children? Have you experienced the fulfilment of this promise, "Thou shalt call me, My Father?" If not, cherish it from this day forth: I pray God that it may be the spirit peculiarly amongst us all: I pray to God that the spirit of slaves may be chased away for ever; and that instead of finding the service of God irksome and burdensome to our spirits, it may be the joy of our souls. May God grant that our obedience may be henceforth a most willing service, and that we may rejoice in his promises with most abundant hope.

But I am addressing some who are not at all conscious that God has given them the spirit of children; who cannot say that God has taught them to call him their father; but who know that all their religion (if it deserves the name), is the fear of, and the desire to escape, the punishment which they know their sins deserve. Is that religion? What do you more than others? What is there in a disposition like this beyond those in whose hearts there reigns bitter enmity towards God? If you have no wish but to secure some enjoyments in another world, the nature of which you little understand, and which, if they were fully explained, you would not

relish, is that religion? There is no piety in it; there is nothing that should afford the slightest blame to those doubts which sometimes harass you; nothing which should induce you to suppose you have passed from death unto life. To have the arrow of conviction driven deep into our hearts, and the links of bondage rivetted fast upon our limbs, is better than to be careless. It is better to hear the clanking of the chain, and to feel its burden, than to suppose we are free when we are bound down to sin, and the bond-slaves of Satan. But it is not piety. To have no love for God's ways, to have no delight in God's perfections, to taste no sweetness in calling him your father—is this religion? Is this the character of those who are fit for heaven? Is this the employment to which the children of God are destined hereafter? There must be something far, far better: and I would impress it on all who feel that this change has not been given to them, that the spirit of slaves has not been exchanged for the spirit of children, I would impress it on your memory—and it is essential to salvation because it is essential to true religion—that you will never know anything of God in Christ till this spirit is imparted. Seek it, then, as one of the greatest blessings, in all those means with which you are favoured, and to which the word of God may prompt you: seek it through Christ by the Spirit: and never rest till, with a joy of heart far better than any earthly good ever did or could bestow, you can say, “**My father,**” believing that you shall never turn away from him.

THE LORD THE CHRISTIAN'S INHERITANCE.

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“The Lord is his inheritance.”—DEUTERONOMY, x. 9.

As it is out of the power of any but those who have experienced them, to comprehend aright the blessings which God bestows upon the real Christian, so is it impossible that, when experienced, any language can be found by which they may be adequately described. As there are some natural scenes, of which, owing to their wonder and sublimity, or the intricacy and minuteness of the detail, it is impossible to convey a correct idea by any representation of art, so the Christian's hidden life, after all the efforts of description, and all the powers of language have been exhausted on the subject, to the worldly man is a hidden life still; the eye must have pierced behind the veil which separates the visible from the invisible, and have fathomed the deep things of God, ere we can understand all that is meant by the privileges of the true believer, and the promises vouchsafed to him by the Almighty.

Accordingly, the promises of Holy Scripture are for the most part presented to us under general statements, and couched in general terms; calculated, indeed, from their manifest excellence and beauty, perceptible to the most superficial observer, to influence the heart and captivate the affections; but only in fact exhibiting a broad outline of splendour and glory, which the believer fills up from the treasures of his own experience, and touches into completeness with a pencil enriched from the resources of actual enjoyment.

These observations will apply themselves to a promise which, under different varieties of expression, is not seldom presented to the real Christian in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, namely, that “the Lord is his inheritance.” It is evident that some great and unusual

blessing is signified, when we are said to be in possession of the Eternal One, whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain; but it is only by the work of the Spirit of God, actually applying this blessing to the heart, that we can really know all that the promise contains, and become acquainted with the infinite abundance of its mercies. We are obliged to declare most explicitly, that it is with this as with all other promises, they can only be adequately known by those by whom they are experienced and felt, and language is utterly powerless to convey them in anything like their reality to the dead and unconverted soul; still, however, to this, as to others, there is attached a general meaning which it may be useful to all to ascertain, and I earnestly pray that the Spirit of God may be with us in the inquiry, that it may be to us for awakening, for consolation, or for strength.

“*The Lord is his inheritance.*” The obvious meaning of having the Lord for our inheritance is, that we have dedicated ourselves to his service, that we have surrendered ourselves altogether to him, the energies of the body and the faculties of the mind, to do his will and advance his kingdom and glory; again, that we have secured him as our own for ever, that we are attached to him as a man to a possession which he cannot alienate; further, that we have, as it were, the use of the Lord God Almighty, that his perfections and his grace are guaranteed to us to be employed for our personal interest and advantage; and, lastly, that we are in the actual enjoyment of those blessings which belong to living in a state of favour with the righteous Governor of the universe. “The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup; thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.”

Now to have the Lord for his inheritance is a privilege that attaches itself to a man the moment that he becomes interested in the promises of the Gospel. As soon as he hears, believes, and obeys the message from on High, separates himself from the world, and is added as a member to the true Church of Christ, that moment does God surrender himself to him as his portion: “Thou art my portion, O Lord; I have said that I would keep thy words.” And it is a privilege that goes on into eternity; it is not interrupted by the separation of the soul from the body, nor by its passage into the scenes of an untried existence: “My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever.” *In life*

and after death, in time and in eternity, the true believer has the Lord for his inheritance, and we shall attend to these two divisions in endeavouring, by the blessing of God, to make an edifying and practical application of the present text.

First, **IN LIFE** the true believer realizes the promise, and has the Lord for his inheritance.

First, *Because he deliberately chooses him in preference to the charms and allurements of the world.* We know well there is another inheritance more obviously presented to our view: even the world with its allurements, its vain and shadowy delights. With every persuasive argument it commends itself to our choice. It presents an unreal image to our view, decks it with all the fairy colours of imagination, and pushes it forward to our embraces. It excites the senses, and promises them gratification; it subdues the understanding, and makes it believe that there is something really good and substantial in those things which it so lavishly promises; it enlists the reason in its service, supplies food to the passions, and captivates the affections. And all the while it is leading us away from God, and godly things. The natural sin and irreligion that have their seat in every heart, being combined into one mass of action and of opinion, and deriving ten-fold strength from the accumulation, rush on in rebellion against the Almighty with fearful impetuosity, and hurry us along in an almost irresistible torrent. If it does not commit us to gross sins, though even these are too much countenanced by the world, it yet produces deadness of feeling, a dislike of all serious religion, and a total disregard of the interests of the immortal spirit. It solicits the young and amiable, to whom the hopes and fears, the joys and promises of religion more particularly address themselves. It establishes its dominion over the old, even when every thing connected with it is just escaping from their grasp. We are aware that efforts are often made to combine these two inheritances, the Lord Jehovah and an ungodly world; or to possess the one here, and to establish a claim to the other in eternity. But the two are utterly incompatible, they cannot co-exist, nor can the things of this world be to us an introduction into glory. "The portion of Jacob," says the prophet, "is not like them: for he is the former of all things, the Lord of Hosts is his name." The lesson is emphatically repeated by our divine Master: "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." Again it

is announced by his inspired servants: "The friendship of the world is enmity with God." Before the eye of the true Christian there is extended another and a far different portion, even the service of God; to labour in the cause of Jesus Christ, to dedicate his life to him, and to worship him in spirit and in truth. On the calmest deliberation, the most mature reflection, and on reasons grounded on the truest principles, he makes his choice for the Lord God. He gradually renounces the world; day by day he becomes less absorbed in its pleasures and pursuits, and lives more and more continually for a better and a higher end. In proportion as he is separated from the world, does the Lord become his inheritance; he is more closely united to him, and more exclusively employed in his service; he perceives the wisdom of his choice, tastes of the blessings that are at God's right hand, and finds a supply of all his wants from the fulness that is in Christ Jesus; that the Lord is his portion and his sole inheritance, he has taken him for his own, and every other less perfect and substantial he has absolutely and utterly renounced.

Again: *The Christian has the Lord for his inheritance, in that all things are working together for his final salvation.* I know not that there can be conceived a greater privilege than to be able to take such a view of God's Providence, as to be convinced that all events and circumstances are so ordered as to be working together for the final salvation of our souls. Thus every thing that God ordains to befall his chosen servant in this world of trial, is seen to be directly tending to one point. Each peculiarity of circumstance, the state of life in which he is placed, the men by whom he is surrounded, his hours of prosperity, the disappointment of his wishes, the heaviest afflictions, even the hinderances he meets with in his Christian course and exclusion from religious advantages, all are doing the divine work, and tending, with unerring certainty, to his final happiness and glory. That such a privilege belongs to the real Christian is not left to conjecture, nor to the conclusions of human reasoning on the government and providence of God. "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to his purpose." Such was the experience of Paul, under circumstances perhaps more trying than any other to a faithful and zealous minister of the word, when the loving and peaceable Gospel of Jesus Christ was preached in a spirit of envy and strife in order that it might add

affliction to his bonds: "I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ." The confidence that animated the breast of the apostle need not be absent from our own. Every thing is contributing to build up the servant of Jesus Christ, and to create in him a fitness for heavenly places. Things indifferent in themselves, by this become of unspeakable importance. Things, in themselves grievous and afflicting, by this are invested with glory and unutterable joy. They are divine instruments, separating him from the world, uniting him to Jesus Christ, vanquishing the carnal mind, overcoming the dominion of sin, infusing a spirit of holiness, conforming him to the Gospel pattern, and raising up the man a new creature from the ruins of the fall. Thus to him God is in every thing. In all events he beholds his inheritance, for the Lord is with them all. They are sanctified by the presence of Jehovah. In every one of them "he bows his heavens and comes down." "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in him."

But again: The true believer has the Lord for his inheritance, *because he has the peace of God shed abroad in his heart.* The search after a real and abiding peace is one in which we are all engaged. By a thousand different paths men pursue one and the same object. And all are agreed in this, in hopes and anticipations of its attainment. The worldly man anticipates the day when, his present toil and difficulty at an end, he shall enter into rest and happiness as yet unknown. He does not believe his present disquietude will last for ever, and it would make him miserable if he did. He has a scene in his mind's eye, which, removed from the objects of his care, will leave his soul at liberty to take advantage of all the means of enjoyment within his reach. Alas! he is unconscious that to change the scene and vary the circumstances of existence is not to change the heart, and make that world of restlessness and agitation the abode of happiness and peace. Not thus can he still the cravings of diseased nature, nor satisfy the legitimate desires of an immortal spirit. He carries the sting within in his own heart, and the poison rankles in his veins independently of the beauty or deformity of the external scene. Unconverted and still alienated from God, he asks a happiness he will never find. God is the sole fountain of bliss, and Christ alone is able to satisfy the soul, and his peace is pledged to no one but the true believer, while to him it is guaranteed by the word and promise of the

Almighty. It is the express assurance of the great Head of the Church: "My peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth give I unto you." The assurance is repeated by his apostle: "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ." Its faithfulness has been proved by every son of man who has sought his pleasures at God's right hand, and become personally interested in the merits and perfections of the Saviour. In every such case, without exception, has there been a discovery of the peace of God. The voice of Christian experience is unanimous. God does not hide himself from those whom he has given to his beloved Son. They have a "joy with which the stranger cannot intermeddle:" a joy independent of, and superior to, all outward circumstances. It is poured down into the heart from the bosom of Jehovah. It is the saint's inheritance, the presence of God, the foretaste of that bliss which will be shed around and upon them, in its perfection, in the world of eternity.

But further *The true believer has surrendered to him the Lord Christ himself as his inheritance; he has him for his own.* It is the assurance of St. John that "he that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life." Thus, having the Son is made the distinguishing characteristic of the true Christian, for every true Christian is an inheritor of life eternal. He has, therefore, the Son, for if he had him not he would be yet dead, dead in trespasses and sins, and unransomed from the second death; but now he was dead and is alive again, he liveth and believeth in Jesus, and shall never die. He, therefore, hath the Son, for he that hath not the Son hath not life. Again, in his Epistle to the Ephesians, Paul prays for the Spirit for his converts, "that Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith." And it is the promise of Christ himself unto those that love him, that he and the Father "will come unto him, and make their abode with him." The believer is united to the Son of God by a mysterious union, but not on that account less real and actual. He is united to him by a living faith. He has him by that faith which is the substance of things hoped for, and which therefore puts him in an anticipated possession here of all that he is to enjoy in fulness and in perfection hereafter. He has him as the propitiation for his sin, his substitute in the sight of God, for wisdom, for righteousness, for sanctification and redemption. He accepts him as his prophet and teacher, he submits himself to

his guidance, and forms himself by his precepts. He knows him as his ruler and his king, and walks in obedience to his commands. Above all, he takes him for a principle of holiness, to sanctify his heart, and prepare him, by an entire conversion, for heavenly abodes and the immediate presence of Jehovah. In a word, he has him for all the ends for which he is revealed in Scripture. I ask, then, whether the true Christian may not be said to have the Son of God? Does he not dwell in his heart by faith? Does he not come and make his abode with him? He has the Son. The Son is possessed, in the highest and most important sense, not by the world that is guided by his providence, not by the heavens that behold his glory, not by the devils that feel his power, but by the lowly and contrite heart that bows at his footstool, and rejoices in his salvation.

Thus, then, is the Lord the Christian's inheritance in this life. He has deliberately chosen him for his own, in preference to the charms and allurements of the world; all things are working together for the final salvation of his soul; there is shed abroad upon his heart the peace that passeth understanding; and he possesses the Son of God by a living and abiding faith. And the believer actually feels all this; it is not a mere theory; he knows it by the undoubted testimony of his own secret but sure experience. As surely as there is a spirit within him capable of being invigorated and refreshed by the Spirit of Almighty God: as surely as the Christian life is altogether different from that of a world lying in ignorance: as surely as he has found the events and trials of his earthly pilgrimage building him up and preparing him for his eternal home: as surely as he has ever felt within his heart God's unutterable peace: as surely as he knows himself personally interested in the work of his dying and risen Saviour, so surely does he feel that the Lord is his inheritance; the Lord is his portion, and he is a portion which no power in the universe can rend away.

But not only in this life, but also AFTER DEATH—not only in time, but also IN ETERNITY, has the Christian the Lord for his inheritance. He is not deprived of his portion by the separation of soul and body, by the change of scene, nor the commencement of a spiritual existence. Not only is it his own now, but also in the world to come.

For, first, *He is eternally with him.* Wherever is the heaven

where Christ lives and reigns, there is the habitation of his chosen people. They are with him where he is, they see him as he is, they walk in the light of his countenance. "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face." Whenever death summons us to leave this earthly tabernacle, we "depart, and are with Christ, which is far better." When the day of judgment comes, we "meet him in the air," and "so shall we ever be with the Lord." It is not within the compass of death itself, nor the powers of darkness, nor the tribunal of God, to separate those from Jesus whom he has once loved. In eternity he is theirs for evermore. No veil shall then obscure from the longing vision the everlasting brightness of his presence; no envious distance interfere to bar us from personal intercourse with the beloved; no earth-born languor shall control the rising spirit. Never again shall the face of God be hidden from us, or the heart seek him in vain. Praise shall be offered at the very foot of the eternal throne; the heavenly harps must be swept in the presence of Him who has placed them in our hands, and homage shall be paid to the personal effulgence of the Deity.

But the great truth stands out in all its excellency when we find *it is the presence of the Lord that constitutes the believer's happiness and joy.* Every joy and blessing of those blessed places originates in the fact, that we are to dwell in the presence of the Lord. His presence is the fountain and spring of happiness to every individual of his glorified Church. Hence it is the prayer of Christ in behalf of his accepted servants, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me." He knows that to behold his glory is sufficient for the perfect blessedness of every immortal spirit. In the same beatific vision rests the unlimited perfection to which it is our hope that we shall attain: "When he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." The image of the great God, seen, beheld, and actually enjoyed, shall at once exalt the creature to the highest excellence of which it is capable. Every thing also that is essential to a perfect and eternal existence shall be supplied from the same source: "The city has no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God does lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." Thus the Lord is the believer's inheritance in the highest and most important sense. He not only possesses him, but he fills all his desire. He

is his life, his strength, his joy, his everlasting blessedness. All other things are now become worthless and without price. All his being is occupied with this glorious portion, and not one faculty of the soul wanders unsatisfied for want of an object great and good enough to fill it.

In these several ways, in life and after death, in time and in eternity, is the Lord the inheritance of the true believer: an inheritance, my Christian friends, secured to the meanest of us all, to the poorest, the most lowly, and the most ignorant among us, by a more binding instrument than earthly charter; more boundless than the ocean, and brighter than the patrimony of kings: an inheritance which we possess now, but of which the full use is reserved to another life; which is already in our hands, and awarded by the supreme judicature, but which will shew forth all its splendour and all its excellence only at that moment when we are most capable of enjoying it.

There are some remarks grounded on the foregoing inquiry, which before I conclude I would, with the grace of God, leave to the solemn consideration of all who hear me this day. Let us then bear in mind,

First, *That whether we have made the Lord our inheritance must be the criterion of our hopes.* He is the portion of every real Christian, of every one who has an interest in the mercies of a covenant God. To have no part in him is to be an outcast from the promises, to live with the divine wrath upon our heads. This, then, is a question which we may urge upon you without any charge of enthusiasm, whether you have secured the Lord for your inheritance. Have you chosen him in preference to the charms of a vain and deceitful world? Have you found this life a scene of preparation for that which is to come? Do you know anything of the peace of God, which passeth understanding? Are you personally interested in the work of Christ, as your Redeemer from the penalties of the law and the power of sin—in the work of his Spirit as the sanctifier of your heart and your affections? Have you appropriated this by a living faith? Has he become your wisdom, your righteousness, your sanctification and redemption? These are questions which must be answered, and answered in the affirmative, or else we are still in our sins: to us a Saviour has been preached in vain.

Secondly, Let us also seriously inquire, *what will be the state of*

those in the next world who have not made the Lord their inheritance? Can their souls be conceived in any way capable of participating in heavenly joy? Is there anything in the circumstances or employments of redeemed spirits which can fill up the measure of their cup, and make them perfectly and for ever blessed? Eternity is to be spent in the presence of the Lord Jehovah, and from that fact the joy of heaven is derived; every part of its anticipated blessedness is rested on that single circumstance. Will the sensualist, the ungodly, or any one of those who have laid up their treasure upon earth, or any one who, in habits and pursuits, in desires and affections, is essentially worldly, and of the things of this world, find a heaven in this? Will those who are alienated from the life of God here, rejoice in it hereafter? Shall those who are averse to spiritual things now, find their joys made infinite by their full effulgence? No! tell their expectant spirits that they are to dwell for ever in the unveiled presence of the Almighty, that they are to be employed for ever in the utterance of those praises to which here their lips were strangers, that the eye of God is to be fixed for ever on those hearts whose sins have never been repented of nor washed away, and you have said enough—it would be a very hell to them in heaven. We cannot believe that the mere act of dying will effect any change in the habits and inclinations, the affections and desires of the soul. We know of no purgatorial fires by which the spirit may be cleansed, and prepared for the association of angels and the Mediator of the new covenant. Allowing that God could so far forget his purity, his faithfulness, and all the essential attributes of his character, as to admit to his society and his blissful habitation those who would have none of him on earth, and what have you done? Have you provided for them any probable means of enjoyment, or anything to allay and sooth the stings and anguish of remorse? Do you not, even on this supposition, consign them to a miserable eternity?

Let me then beseech you, by the mercies of God, and all that yourselves hold most dear, to make the Lord your own now, and enter upon the everlasting possession. It is true there are many things exclusively belonging to this world eminently calculated to arrest and engage the inclinations and affections of the soul. But exactly in proportion as you surrender yourselves to these, exactly in proportion as you are absorbed in them, do you renounce the Lord as your inheritance. And then, when you have made for-

feiture of all the promises of the Gospel, and all the riches of God's eternal kingdom, for the pleasures or the interests of this little scene ; then, when you have bartèred away the richest and the fairest inheritance that was ever offered to the acceptance of an immortal spirit, to follow the imaginations of your own hearts ; what remains but the bitterness of regret, and to find too late that you have taken to yourselves lamentations, and mourning, and woe ? O ! may God, of his great mercy, grant that such may never be the portion assigned to us by the irrevocable sentence of the Judge. Amen.

THE MINISTER'S FAREWELL ENTREATY.

REV. T. MORTIMER, B.D.

ST. LEONARD'S CHURCH, SHOREDITCH, SEPTEMBER 26, 1836.

“ I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love: endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”—EPHESIANS, iv. 1—6.

ST. PAUL was a wise master-builder; he built for eternity: he took care to lay the doctrine of the cross as the great foundation-stone; and having laid it, he built upon it, and he built a super-structure which shall outlive time—spiritual temples, living temples, holy, consecrated to God.

We have now, through the goodness of our God upon us, been spared to preach among you the word of life for nearly fifteen years. Well can I call to mind the feelings with which I preached my first sermon as your lecturer: they were feelings of fear rather than of hope: there were many, many fears; but I trust, there were many, many prayers: and having obtained help of God, we continue until now. Some, who then were active and useful, are sleeping in the vaults beneath us, or in the graves around us. Fifteen years make a great change among all classes; they make a great change in you, and they make a great change in me. But our God remains the same, eternally the same—the hope, the refuge of his people, even to the end of the world. I have often had occasion, when standing here as one of your parochial clergy—I have often had occasion to speak boldly, to denounce vice, to threaten the sinner, to tell the guilty of his doom, and to speak without fear in the face of any living being, in the discharge of my duty. But I now speak with authority among you no more; I this day lay down my office among you: I speak no longer, I say, with authority, in denouncing the sinner; I have done with that; but I may speak with entreaty, for the comfort and edification of the church; I may entreat you in the language of the apostle, “ I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord,

beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”

To these words, then, we direct your attention. Let me consider, first, the Christian's calling; let me consider, secondly, the unity of the Christian church; let me consider, thirdly, the entreaty of the Christian minister.

We are, first, to consider, THE HOPE OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH. “One hope of your calling:” what is that? Does it relate to any thing on earth? I think not: I think it relates to a larger assembly than this; I think it relates to a better meeting in a better world; I think it regards the assembly in that “house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” From the moment of our conversion to God by the power of the Holy Ghost, we long to get prepared for that house which is in heaven; we long to get a meetness for, and, at last, an abundant entrance ministered unto us into, the joy of our Lord.

What has been our grand object in preaching to you? It has been to try to win you to heaven. We have often spoken very plain things; we have often spoken things at which a vain and wicked world thought proper to sneer. We never cared for that: through the grace of God enabling us, we have endeavoured to speak *the truth*; and, as far as we knew it, *the whole truth*; and, as God Almighty helped us, *nothing but the truth*. Ah! we did not come among you—God is witness—panting, desiring to be enriched by you: but we came among you very earnestly desiring to do you good; very earnestly desiring that whensoever we shall be called to give up our stewardship, it might be with joy, and not with sorrow. Ah, brethren! this was our prayer, and, I trust, with some it will be answered: I trust there are those who connect with these sacred walls every thing that is dear, every thing that is hallowed, every thing that is blessed. Here your Saviour met with you; here he spoke to you, first a word of *warning*, bidding you flee from the wrath to come; and then a word of *mercy*, when he said, “Him that cometh unto me I will in nowise cast out;” and then a word of *encouragement* to the weary pilgrim, “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” And you shall have it by and bye. Yet a little longer struggling in a world of sin, yet a little conflict with the grand enemy of God and man, both without and

within you ; and your pilgrimage shall terminate ; you shall be called to take off the shield from your arm, to lay down the sword, to take the helmet from off your head, and lay them down as trophies at Immanuel's feet. O ! I glory in it—the hope of our calling is “ the inheritance of the saints in light.” We are now sent to preach to people, and to try to turn them “ from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God,” that all the benefit should not end with their lives, or with our lives ; but we are sent to preach to them that word of everlasting life which, if attended by the power of the Holy Ghost, and brought home to the heart of man, shall issue in eternal glory, shall issue in his being a partaker of the inheritance of saints, before the throne of God : “ To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.” Ah ! I do hope in God to meet some of you at the right hand of the Judge, who shall have to bless God Almighty to all eternity that you ever entered these church doors. I do hope that at that great day, for which all other days were made, when the judgment shall be set, and the books shall be opened, and the dead, small and great, shall stand before God, I do hope there are those in this parish, who will have to thank God that this house of mercy ever was built, that these doors were ever opened to them, and that here the word of God was faithfully preached, and his sacraments duly administered.

But let me turn to the second thing, and that is the **UNITY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH**. Look at the number of times that the little monosyllable *one* occurs in the text. “ There is *one* body, the church ;” the church is the body of Christ. “ There is *one* Spirit :” by which Spirit the whole body of the church is governed and managed—a directing, sanctifying, comforting, and strengthening Spirit. One body, the church ; one Spirit, the Holy Ghost ; *one* blessed *hope* of eternal life, issuing in eternal glory. One hope : all the saints of God through all the world, at this very hour are influenced by the same Spirit, and animated by the same hope : they are looking forward to the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, hath promised in Christ. Talk we of the Christians in the most distant parts of the world ? Think we for a moment of those in Bengal, in Calcutta, in Madras, in any of our Indian presidencies ? Think we of the Christians in New South Wales, or in any part of the habitable globe ? Think we of the members of the ancient Syrian church still remaining in the East ? Or think we of

the members of our own apostolical church scattered throughout the world? Or think we of all the members of Christ's holy catholic church throughout all the world? All are influenced by one Spirit, all depending upon one Christ's blood, upon one Christ's intercession with the Father, enjoying the blessed influences of one Spirit, and all pressing onward and rising up to the hope of eternal life. "*One Lord, one faith, one baptism;*" only one Saviour; only one holy catholic faith, including the grand fundamentals of religion; (and no church under heaven, no church under God's heaven, holds the catholic faith in more purity than does our own church of England.) "*One Lord, one faith, one baptism,*" by which we are admitted into Christ's church, by which we were admitted as the children of God, and which, attended by the power of the Holy Ghost, in cases innumerable was the beginning of our everlasting life.

But mark: "*One God and Father of all;*" to whom we come as children to a father; not in the spirit of the slave, but in a filial, child-like spirit. "*My God is reconciled,*" may the Christian say—

" My God is reconciled ;
His pard'ning voice I hear :
He owns me for his child ;
I can no longer fear ;
But now with confidence draw nigh,
And ' Father, ' ' Abba, Father, ' cry."

This is part of the Christian calling; this is part of the unity of the Christian church; in this all the faithful throughout all the world are interested. And mark, it is added, "*One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all:*" who by his superintending providence orders and governs all things throughout the world; who by his superintending grace influences the whole body of Christ's people, pervading the universal church with an unseen, but not unfelt, influence; and finally, who is "in you all"—God dwelling in the heart of man, there taking up his abode. "But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? Behold, the heavens, and the heaven of heavens, cannot contain Thee; how much less this house:" and every Christian may add, *this heart!*

But I come, in the third place, having considered the hope of the Christian's calling, having noticed the unity of the Christian church; I come, in the third place, to point out the ENTREATY OF

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER. I come not now to command. Often, as your minister, as one of your parochial clergy, though the least and the most unworthy among them, it was my duty to command you to give yourselves unto God; it was my duty to speak with authority; it was my duty to speak with boldness, unflinchingly and fearlessly. But now those days are over: I cease this day to have any connexion with you, though God forbid I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you. But I have to entreat you; I have a request to make: I don't say to worldly men, for they cannot understand it, and if they could they would not comply with it: I make the request to those who, through the grace of God, have believed. And what is it? It is this: "I beseech you"—I *beseech* you—"I beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called." I speak now no longer with authority; but I *beseech* you. O do not go and disgrace me and disgrace yourselves by unholy living! "I beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called." I have done with the sinner now till the day of judgment; I have done with denouncing the sinner, standing in this pulpit; but I have not done entreating you—"I beseech you."

And the apostle brings it in very touchingly: "I therefore the prisoner of the Lord." He was in trouble at the time; and God knows so am I. My poor dying wife said to me, only a few Sundays back, "I have one request: pray resign Shoreditch before I die, for it will kill you if you go on." In trouble, then, and in affliction, I come among you; and I come, and I entreat you to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called." Think you, Christian, O what a stab it would be to my heart if I were told, "Ah, sir, there is one of your professed converts, and he is living a very unholy life; and there is another, he is very proud; and there is another, he is given to drink; and there is another, he is given to covetousness; and there is another, he is wallowing in sensuality." O! I think I could bear a good deal, but I don't think I could bear that. No, I would rather hear you were dead in Christ, and rather hear of those who, through God's mercy, had been given me as the children of my prayers—I would rather you were dying in the Christian faith, in a holy consistency of life, and in the full triumph of the Gospel, and gone to heaven: but I could not bear to hear you were walking in an unholy, in an unchristian, in an unbecoming manner.

Now, then, if you wish, beloved, if you wish thus to walk—you have your prayer-books often in your hands, and, I trust, your Bibles oftener still—look at these little passages which our old dear Church brings forward to her members for their spiritual sustenance and comfort. O how beautiful, how touching, how excellent they are! Look at the passage before us. Do you wish to walk *worthily*? You must walk *lowly*; you must be very lowly: you must avoid pride; you must pray for the grace of humility: and if you want a pattern, behold the blessed Redeemer, who, though he was rich, for your sakes became poor. “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” If you want to walk “worthy of your vocation,” you must walk very *meekly*, and with a great deal of long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, trying to bear each other’s burdens, and to bear with each other’s failings. We are not angels; we are *men*: we are fallen, we are degraded, we are prone to what is wrong; but if we have the true grace of God, we shall seek to bear with one another. “Forbearing one another,” says the apostle in another place, “and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.”

But mark, you are to make a vigorous effort to be *a united people*, to preserve “the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.” I do not like—and I say it honestly, much as I wish to live in peace with all men—I do from my soul regret the alteration that has taken place in part of the Christian Church during the last few years; an alteration which I greatly regret and deeply lament. The time was, and was when I entered on the duties of this lectureship, that our dissenting friends regarded the Church of England with kindness: they differed from us on points of doctrine—some few of doctrine, and some few of discipline; but they said (and they were true to their saying), “We wish you well: we have no desire to pull down the Church; we have no desire to injure the episcopal Church of the land: we wish you well in God’s name, and to do all the good you can, and pray the Lord to be with you:” and we then could shew brotherly union to such men. But I cannot, and I will not, and I dare not, as a minister of the Church of England, shew a spirit of union with those who say concerning

our dear old Church, "Down with her, down with her, even to the ground." I regret to hear such a spirit has shewn itself. I say not that all our nonconforming brethren have acted thus; but many have: and when one leading member of their body has dared to tell us in public that the Church of England has damned more souls than she has saved, I say such an assertion is an egregious falsehood; it is a falsehood before God and man; it is a falsehood for which the lips that uttered it, unless the party deeply regret it, shall give an account before Him that is ready to judge quick and dead. At the same time, I will not hesitate to say, that it has given me unfeigned delight and pleasure to behold, that, while some of our nonconforming brethren have thus attacked the Church, and attacked her in the day of her distress, and have joined with the infidel and the Papist in endeavouring to pull her down, others, who had been long looking on, and it was dubious what they would do, returned to their own principles, and shewed themselves on the side of sound order and real religion. The Wesleyan Methodists, as a body, when the Church established in this land was attacked by every scoffer, was attacked by sneers, and taunts, and ill-will on one hand and another—the Wesleyan Methodists declared—"Our founder was a member of that Church, was a clergyman of that Church: we will not have anything to do with insulting that Church; we will not have anything to do with pulling down that Church, or attacking that Church in the day of her distress."

Now, brethren, endeavour to keep "the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace." You find it sometimes a hard task: but when you hear cruel speaking against that Church you love; when you hear those who know nothing of what that church is doing, and abusing it, and speaking of it as useless, then endeavour to preserve the unity of the spirit, and contend for the faith in the spirit of the faith. Let it be "in the bond of peace:" let there be no railing (railing for railing does no good); but contrariwise, blessing. The Church of England has been latterly a persecuted church: the Church of England has had to suffer from the Papist, from the Socinian, from the political dissenter, and those who would have been glad to have pillaged her property, and taken it all away from her, and left the Church to take care of herself. But I do not hesitate to say (and I say it in the face of God), I believe the Church of England was never in so sound and healthy a state since the period of the Reformation: I believe, in my soul before God, there never was such a body of holy, devoted men amongst the clergy, such a body of holy,

self-denying men amongst the laity, as there are at present. Keep, then, a united people. Hold up your clergy by your prayers. Show your love to Christ by your love to his Church. Endeavour to walk consistently with the rules of that Church to which you belong: but, remember, one rule is, *charity to those that differ from you*. You never gain any thing for the Church of England by abusing those who differ from us, or by justifying every thing, right or wrong, that is done amongst us. There are abuses that need to be rectified; and which are fast being rectified, thanks be to God: but, I repeat it, the Church of England is at this hour God's great instrument for the conversion of these realms, and the preservation of true religion in the world.

While, then, I say, Endeavour to show brotherly love to all who really love your Lord and Master in sincerity, I do not say, Hold out your hand to the Socinian; I say, Refuse it: I do not say, Hold out your hand to the Papist; I say, Refuse it. Yes; contend for the Christian and the Protestant faith: and if some, who ought to have known better, and of whom we believe that they are good men, will cruelly speak against the Church established in these realms; then be this your spirit—being reviled, do you bless; being persecuted, do you submit.

And now, beloved brethren, I hasten to bid you FAREWELL in the name of the Lord. I have much to be thankful for that I have been spared to preach God's word amongst you so many years. I received, last week, a very kind, and courteous, and truly fatherly letter from your kind old vicar (whose life I pray God to spare), a letter from a father to a son, expressive of the greatest kindness towards me on my retirement from this lectureship. Well, by and bye all earthly connexions must be brought to an end; sooner or later one, and another, and another will have gone: and what do you think when I tell you, what you know already as well as I can tell you, concerning the assembly of the last day, that, compared with that assembly, this is nothing? No; every individual now present must die; every individual must, sooner or later, be committed to the dust. But man does not sleep in the grave for ever: there is the resurrection of the dead; there is the life everlasting. I have to acknowledge many infirmities, many failings: but, thank God, my conscience does not accuse me that I ever kept back a faithful truth, were it ever so displeasing. My conscience does not smite me this day that I ever kept back anything that was profitable

for you, for fear of offending you : God is witness, and you also, that I have endeavoured, according to my feeble ability, to speak the word in love. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace ; praying him to keep you from falling, and present you faultless at last before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.

THE BEST GIFTS OF GOD BESTOWED ON HIS PEOPLE.

REV. J. H. EVANS, A.M.

JOHN STREET CHAPEL, KING'S ROAD, OCTOBER 4, 1836.

"And Pharaoh spake unto Joseph, saying, Thy father and thy brethren are come unto thee: the land of Egypt is before thee: in the best of the land make thy father and brethren to dwell; in the land of Goshen let them dwell."—GENESIS, xlvii. 5, 6.

IF we were on a journey, a journey towards our home, our long-thought-of, fondly-beloved home, and were told that the whole of that journey was wearisome, that the roads were rocky, the hills steep, all the accommodations by the way wretched and miserable; if we were told we should have no comfort in our way thither, that nothing was before us but storm and tempest; yet the thought of home, the blessedness of the anticipation, the consciousness that soon it would all be over, and that then we should experience the full enjoyment of the long-thought-of, fondly-beloved home—how this would cheer us!

Now if the Lord God Almighty were so to deal with us, and place before us, as indeed he does place before us, eternal life, eternal glory, the full enjoyment of himself in heaven, and all our journey thither be painful, wretched, and miserable; if we had no pleasantness by the way, nothing to mitigate our sufferings by the way, nothing to look forward to but storm, and tempest, and calamity; yet the thought of home, the thought of the glory, ought to be enough to cheer our spirits, to animate our hopes, and make us travel on the way almost as if there were no roughness in it. Now God *hath* so dealt with us; he has not only given to his Israel the promise and the beginning of eternal life; he has not only given to them the glorious anticipation of opening glory hereafter, and the full enjoyment of himself in that glory; but he has given them all blessings *by the way*. The ways of obedience are ways of pleasantness, and all its paths are peace: even *upon earth*, we may say, the true Israel of God have "the best of the land:" they have the best *by the way*; and what shall we say of the *termination* of the way? We may well

say of every poor, careless, thoughtless worldling here, this evening, that they are toilers up the hill—toilers “all the night,” and “have taken nothing.” O, if such a one did but know for one moment, if he had but one glimpse of, what there is in the possession of Christ, and what there is in the real substance of the Gospel when really experienced by the power of God; then would his poverty and wretchedness stare him in the face as an armed man, and he would feel that to this moment he had been living in worse than nothing and vanity.

I will not to-night take up your time by endeavouring to prove, because most who are present feel quite assured, that Israel of old was typical of the true Israel of God; but I shall content myself with presenting three points for your consideration: and may the Holy Ghost lay them upon your consciences, and open them to your understandings; open your understandings unto them, and then give you a spiritual love of them, a purified affection towards them, that they may be exhibited in your life, your conduct, and your temper, to the praise and glory of the God whose grace it is. In the first place, then, I would endeavour to show, that God’s best blessings are towards his true Israel; secondly, consider why it is so; and, thirdly, place before you some of the great practical tendencies of the truth.

In the first place, GOD GIVETH THE BEST UNTO HIS TRUE ISRAEL. He gives them a land of rest, he gives them a land of safety, he gives them a land of abundance, and he giveth them the best things in that land. He not only pardons them, but his pardon is a *costly* pardon. What a poor idea the Socinian has of pardon, to suppose that God forgives us for our wretched tears’ sake, for our repentance’ sake, and for our good works’ sake. Supposing it is so, what a wretched view of pardon he has! It is not worthy the name of pardon. But God, in pardoning his true Israel, pardons them in the way of the most unsullied justice, and the most perfect purity: their redemption cost him his own Son, the life of his own Son; Jesus himself died in order that his church might live; he took the cup of suffering that they might take the cup of blessing; he drank it to the dregs that they might have the cup of blessing to taste by the way, and drink of its fulness to all eternity. When God pardons, he pardons *as* God; it is a costly pardon: and when you and I come to die, and look eternity fair in the face, perhaps this one truth may suffice (and nothing else will suffice at that

moment), that our sins—black as they are, and we know not their blackness—aggravated as they are, and we know but little of their aggravation—our sins may be so brought to our view in a dying moment as we have had no conception of during our lives; and yet, notwithstanding what they are, the blood is the blood of Jesus, and every drop of that blood had the whole glory of Jehovah therein: it is the blood of Him who is infinite. That is the basis of our confidence: take it away, and I have no confidence. The pardon is a costly pardon; the righteousness wherewith he justifies is a costly righteousness—the righteousness of God. My dear hearers, what poor conceptions we have of these great truths! As they pass my lips from time to time, I have sometimes the inward reproach, “What, talking of them again, and yet so little improved in them!” What poor superficial views one seems to have of the truth, that though the believer is what he is, and though he has done what he has done, and though his own righteousness cannot answer God’s law for one of a thousand of the transgressions that he has committed, yet that he stands complete in the righteousness of God; that the saints in heaven are not more justified than he is; that he stands, not in the righteousness of the first Adam, but in the righteousness of the second Adam; and that the righteousness of Christ is as much imputed to him, and as much accounted his, as if belonging to himself originally, by his own obedience in life and in death.

Now this is the best of the land: God giveth his own his best. He not only gives them *pardon*, it is a *costly* pardon: he not only gives them righteousness, but he gives them a *glorious* righteousness. Does he supply their wants? It is *all fulness* he gives them; even for the supply of the little ones, as you observe in the twenty-fourth verse: “And it shall come to pass, in the increase, that ye shall give the fifth part unto Pharaoh; and four parts shall be your own, for seed of the field, and for your food, and for them of your households, and for food for your little ones:” unfolding this great truth—that the supply which is in Christ, is not only for the least, but for the least wants of the least; that there is nothing minute in God’s sight, that there is nothing trifling in his eye, and that he has laid up an abundant supply for the most minute of all circumstances in the Lord Jesus Christ; for helplessness of body, for nervousness of spirit, for a distracted mind, for strong inward temptations, for outward trials, for domestic afflictions, for every thing that concerns us in that straight way, the straightness of which at times no one can enter into but the Lord Jesus Christ himself: and

yet, such is the goodness, and the blessedness, and the largeness of God's heart, that he has treasured up all fulness in Jesus, for the supply of all our wants, so that the true understanding of all our wants is, that there is a supply for this very want in the fulness of Christ, and that I am made to know it and to feel it, that I may take it to him for the supply of it, and honour him by going to him with my emptiness to receive out of his fulness. O, we do then honour him much more than by our poor complaints dishonouring him, and distrusting instead of casting our cares upon him.

Does he command us to pray? He sits on a throne of grace, and he will never have his people look at him in any other view than as on a throne of grace; he will not have them approach him on any other throne. And how would he have them to approach him? With all boldness: let us draw near with boldness: having this great High Priest, this merciful High Priest, who cannot but be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, "let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith:" "let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." And I may put one little comment upon that verse: The more we go there with holy boldness, the more we receive. For there is a sort of preparedness of the spirit for the reception of the blessing, just as the ploughed furrow is prepared for the falling seed. Now in this God is giving the very best to his Israel: why do we wonder at it? He has given them his Son; he has given them his Spirit; he has given them himself: and had we time, and did the subject seem to require it, I might lay before you this most blessed truth—that so vast is that gift of God, and so great is his bestowment of the best on his people, that there is not a perfection of his nature but he would have you have communion with him in that perfection; and the more you so live, the more you will live above circumstances.

But when he giveth them temporal blessings (I say, when he *giveth* them, because sometimes he withholdeth many to them who are dear to him as the apple of his eye; but no *good* thing will he withhold; and if it were a real blessing which thou requiredst, he would never deny it thee, my brother and my sister), but whenever he giveth temporal good, he giveth his people the knowledge of the real enjoyment of that temporal good; and just in proportion as they are led by the Holy Ghost to see him in that good, they have the real enjoyment of that good. Here are two persons, both

healthy ; health is a great blessing ; one receives it as a good thing, but the other receives it from God's loving heart : " My father gives it to me," he says ; " he vouchsafes it to me ; and this health would I dedicate to him to use in his service : the health that he gives I would consecrate to his service, and lay at his feet ; the money that I have I would consecrate to his service, and lay at his feet also." The world has wrong views of this : they think that religion robs us. What does it rob us of ? It robs us of nothing ; it *gives* us *all*, but it robs us of no good thing. Does it mar domestic happiness ? If the pious parent looks on the child who loves him, does it diminish his enjoyment of his child's love ? Does it mar even his understanding ? Who does not see how much there is of turmoil even in the regions of learning, and what mortifications a man stands exposed to who fastens his happiness on what men say concerning him ? But if a man is led to say, as a saint of God, " The measure of talent that I have, God bestowed it upon me ; I cannot give myself more ; and all I have must be used to his praise : it is but little that I have, but what I have I would consecrate to his service, and lay at his feet ;" has he not learned the true secret of enjoyment ?

Yes, beloved : there is, even in temporal things, the best that is given in what God bestows on his people ; and when he removes what they consider good from them, he gives them the best substitute for it. How many have found this out in the region of domestic trial ; in the region of bodily ailment ; in the region of perplexed circumstances ; in the region of bitter disappointment ; in the region of real, actual sorrow : how many of God's dear people have found this to be a truth—" I came closer to Jesus, and Jesus is better in it all. The Holy Ghost did open to me clear views of the Son of God : the objects of sense did sink, but the Lord Jesus rose : I was brought down, and he had heard me ; I was laid low, and he helped me. My earthen vessel was shivered to dust ; but the Lord came, an overflowing fountain, and filled my heart with his love." Is not this giving his people the best ? Who can say what are the blessings connected with a holy frame ; when the mind is enabled to mount up by faith in Christ Jesus, and to go through the cloud ; to go through the press, to go through the daily care, to go through the weekly occupation, to go through the enemies on the right and on the left ; and often to rise above it all, believing in Jesus, to cast our care upon him in patient submission, to yield up the soul to him in a willing surrender ? Who can say

what there is in the holy region of being the means of good to others? O, what the *world* is robbed of! What blessings does the Lord bind up in the obedience of his child! Which of you who have ever gone to the abodes of wretchedness and misery, who have ever been the means in God's hand of binding up the broken heart, of administering to the poor out of your abundance, have given out of your necessities, the widow a mite out of her poverty, when you have been led to deny yourselves for Christ, to walk after Christ, and find it pleasant to put your feet where his feet have been before you—which of you cannot say there has been good conveyed to your souls? Even in self-crucifixion, even in the mortification of the old man, even in bearing evil, even in returning good for evil, turning the left cheek when smitten on the right cheek; who does not say, as the Lord enables him, “What blessings are bound up in that!”

We may truly say, then, that enough has been brought forward to prove that God bestows the best on his people in this world, to say nothing of the land beyond: to say nothing of the heavenly home, of the unclouded skies, of the region of perfect holiness and perfect happiness; to say nothing of the blessedness of that state where tears shall be known no more, where there shall be the full fruition of God and of Christ, and that for ever; to say nothing of all this, we can truly affirm of God's Israel, that, let it be bleak winter or pleasant summer, bright or dark, day or night, prosperity or adversity, God gives the best unto his Israel; he gives the best to his people.

But now observe, secondly, WHY IT IS GOD DOES THIS. Wherever God acteth, he acteth as God—greatly; what he doeth, he doeth as God, worthy God. You and I act below ourselves; God never can act below himself. The great God in his forgiveness is great: in his righteousness he is great; in the abundant supplies of his grace he is great; in the freeness of his salvation he is great; in the sympathies of his love he is great; and that because he is God.

There are two passages that oftentimes cheer my own soul, and perhaps the Lord may make them cheering to your souls. The first is Isaiah, iv. 7—9: “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are

your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts :” which, if I understand aright, means this : you have no conception what there is in the forgiving power of God ; you have no idea how it floweth out from the very greatness of God : and as the heavens are high above this earth, so high are his ways above your ways, and his thoughts above your thoughts : you are as nothing compared with him, and your thoughts are as nothing compared with his doings : you have no conception of what that forgiveness is which is with God. My dear hearers, it is well that we have not, for if God had no more forgiveness in him than you and I have of conception of his power, half our days, it would be wretched for our souls indeed. We want a forgiveness that is worthy of him—great, gracious, glorious, unsearchable, infinite, absolute, eternal : and all this we have in God. Are you walking in peaceable paths now ? They may be rough to-morrow. Are you sailing in smooth water now ? It may be a storm to-morrow. But when that storm cometh, and, perhaps, you are ready to say—and numbers wiser than you, and more acquainted with God, have said it—“ I wonder whether any are quite so bad as I am on the face of God’s earth ;” if such a thought should be laid on your soul, if such a conviction should enter your conscience, perhaps it may be like sweet music in your ears if thou art reminded of these words : Look at the heavens, how high they are ; so high are even God’s ways above your ways, and his thoughts above your thoughts. Whatever God does, he does as God ; he never acts below himself ; he does not, for he cannot. He cannot love more than he does ; he cannot be more powerful than he is ; he cannot be more wise than he is ; neither can he forgive sin more than he does : those whom he forgiveth, he forgiveth as his glory requireth, because he is God.

There is another passage to which my mind is sometimes led, and I find that I have comfort in it. It is in Hosea, xi. How sweet are those words ! God hath sent them to you and to me, if I may so speak, scores of times. “ How shall I give thee up, Ephraim ? how shall I deliver thee, Israel ? how shall I make thee as Admah ? how shall I set thee as Zeboim ? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim : for I am God, and not man ; the holy One in the midst of thee ; and I will not enter into the city.” Now, then, if you ask, why it is that God

giveth the best unto his Israel, it is because what he doeth, he doeth as God; and as he has given them his Son, the greatest of all gifts, the most inestimable of all bestowments, he never acts below himself, but giving his Son, he gives them all *in* his Son, to the praise of the glory of his own abounding grace. The apostle refers to this: "He that spared not his Son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not with us freely give us all things:" what greater inconsistency would there be in giving us the greater, and withholding the less; in giving the Gift of gifts, and withholding from us that which is, after all, the lesser gift; heaven is a lesser gift than the gift of Jesus.

But there is another reason; that is, *the love which he bears towards his Israel*. Who can describe what that love is? The Holy Ghost doth use every figure that we may here and there catch a little (and it is all that we can do) from all the varied metaphors and figures in God's word, of the love of God. "As a hen gathereth her chickens:" "as an eagle stirreth up her nest:" as a mother yearneth over her sucking child: as a father pitieth his son. O, it seems to let one into the very bosom of God: as if he said, "I know you are nothing; it is but a heap of dust, weakness, insufficiency, nothingness: I never forget it." "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust." It is the love of his heart that leads him to give the best to his true Israel: he will withhold nothing from them to whom he has given his Spirit, given them his Son, and given them himself.

Thus we have a second reason, my dear hearers, wherefore the Lord gives to his Israel the very best of the land. He never acts below himself; but he acts out all his love towards them for the abundance of his grace and kindness towards them. But there is another reason, and I think, if I were to lose sight of that, I should lose sight of the Gospel itself: *every blessing that the Israel of God enjoy, they enjoy for the true Joseph's sake*. It is not for their sakes, but it is for Christ's sake: it is not because they deserve, but because He deserves it; it is not in their worthiness that they inherit, so much as in his worthiness: it is because he deserveth all things, that they have all things. O, how sweet is divine truth, and how beautiful it is in its proportions! How lovely is the economy of grace too! Grace itself is inestimable, because it cometh out of the loving heart of a loving father, in all its greatness. It comes endeared to us in all its communications, because it cometh through

the infinite merit of Jehovah-Jesus, the Saviour. O, how needful to bear this in mind continually! We may, as I before hinted, say of ourselves, "I am so insignificant, because of my meanness, and I am so vile, because of my sinfulness; is it possible that I can expect any great thing from God?" Yes, because Christ deserved it: he obtained all for you. I do not speak of *purchasing* them; but this I will say—though I object to the word—in the true sense of it, they come to us through his redemption; and there is not one single blessing in the covenant of grace but what it comes through the redeeming blood of the Son of God: and that endears the grace, and lifts us up while it casts us down, because it leaves us without an atom of worthiness in ourselves, and lifts up Jesus as the alone worthy.

I must hasten to a few remarks on THE PRACTICAL BEARING OF THIS IMPORTANT SUBJECT. Important I conceive it to be; how far the Lord may so lay it on your hearts, as to leave a lasting and permanently sanctifying influence on them, is a solemn consideration. Pray that it may so be: pray that, as it is spoken, the Holy Ghost may, in all its personal application, discover the truth to each of your hearts and consciences, for Christ's sake.

In the first place, I see *great cause for deep thankfulness*. I would never forget, dear brethren, that whatever there may be in the sacred service of supplication, and whatever there may be in pouring out our heart in confession to God (and I would confess to you, that some of the choicest blessings of my life, I think, are always found in the region of confession), yet, I would say, that there is an especial honour put upon thanksgiving. Sometimes one rises from one's knees after earnest supplication, feeling but little consciousness of communion; but, I think, that we are never in a praising state of mind, but there is a special conscious nearness to God. It seems as if we were in that frame of mind which, coming from the Holy Spirit under a sense of mercies received, God setteth his seal on that truth, "He that offereth praise, glorifieth me." Is there anything more touching to a parent's heart than the acknowledging spirit of his child? Is it pleasing to him for his child to come to him with the language of continual want, and yet not acknowledging past mercies? Is there not base ingratitude in that state of mind that will always say, "Give me more grace," and yet never acknowledge what God has already so abundantly vouchsafed? While I would not influence your thankfulness, nor my

own, by warmth of expression, nor by ecstasy of manner, nor by excited feelings, I would dare say this, that never are you in so spiritual a frame of soul, as when most deeply conscious of God's most undeserved mercies. Sometimes we are quite unable to enter, it may be, into our sins; there seems a coldness upon our spirits, and a deadness in our frames; yet, whenever one is led to retrace the mercy of God, to look back and see what God hath been unto us, in delivering us from the paw of the lion, and from the paw of the bear, then we are led to consider that, though we are in this frame of mind, there is no condemnation for them that are in Christ Jesus; that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin; and that while the great Intercessor at the right hand of God still liveth there, and never maketh intercession in vain; when our souls are brought up to that point, when they are brought to retrace God's loving-kindness and mercy, I ask you whether there is not conscious nearness between your souls and God? Let me remind you again, God seemeth to set his seal on that truth, "He that offereth his praise, glorifieth me."

Then there is in the subject that which should lead to great stirring up of *desire*. We should *desire* that we may enter into the best of the land. If God has given it us in Christ, the *pledge* of it in his word, the *substance* of it in his Son, then we should pray, that under the teaching and drawing of his blessed Spirit we may enter into the best of the land; that we may go through the land; that Christ may dwell in our hearts, not as the way-faring man, in a place for a night, but that he may dwell in it in the path and on the bed, and that we may be "rooted and grounded in love, and be enabled to comprehend what is the height, and depth, and length, and breadth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that we may be filled with all the fulness of God." My dear hearers, if God has given us the best of the land, the earnest prayer of our souls should be, that we may enter into the best of the land, and not live, as so many of us do, so much on the borders; rooted and grounded in Christ; not driven about with every wind of doctrine; not living just on our frames and our enjoyments; but living on the great work, on the atoning blood, on the unchangeableness of God, on the covenant ordered in all things and sure; and that these things may be in us not barren things, but things let into the secret recesses of the soul; that we may find substance there; that we may live on them, and die in them, and find them to be sweetness in the midst of all the bitters of the present world. If God

gives so large a promise, we should pray for large faith, for the hand to grapple with the promise, and bring the great blessing into our bosom, simply taking God at his word.

I am sure we have great cause for *deep abasement* as we think of the subject. God has given us the best; what have we given him? I know we can give nothing to him but what we have received: the utmost that the Psalmist could say, in answer to the question, "What shall I render to the Lord for all his mercies?" was, "I will take the cup of salvation, and call on the name of the Lord:" I will take the cup of acknowledgment of his mercies (that is what he means), and pray for greater mercies still. The more God gives, the more we should pray for; and whilst we acknowledge past mercies, we should urge him for the future. We should often think what a feeble return we make to God; that he has given us the best, and we have, perhaps, given him the dregs of our time, our influence, our talents; we have given him our hard hearts. If the Lord gives us the best, we should give him the best: he requires the fat and the blood—the most precious and the most costly; he would have the first-fruits of our time and our influence, but, above all, the first-fruits of our affection: "Give me thine heart." Is there any thing concerning which the Lord God feels more jealousy, than about your affections? Why is it, fond mother, that that dear child is taken from you? Loving wife, why is it that thy dear husband is taken from you? Why was it, thou who didst, perhaps, make an idol of thy character, that there thou wast touched the most closely? Why was it, that that stone which thou didst hew out and polish with so much care, was broken and shivered to pieces? Why did that gourd, which thou didst so admire, sitting beneath its shade, perish because it was smitten, though it bred its own worm and died. Why was all this, but because thy Father wanted thy heart? Nothing will satisfy him but thy heart; nothing will satisfy him but the best of thy affections, that he may reign there, the all of thy spirit, and the all of thy life.

O, that the God of heaven may so condescend to bless his own word, and give to the subject a comforting, edifying influence to our souls, that we may give to God our hearts, and be enabled to say, "Well, Lord, if there be an Isaac, if there be an Absalom, if there be a right hand, if there be a right eye, if there be an Achan in the camp, if there be any thing that would keep me from thee here on earth; thou art my Father and my God: thou hast given me tokens of thy love, costly, precious, inestimable. and here am I, thy

blood-bought child, do with me as seemeth good in thy sight. Cause me to be honest and upright in all my walkings before thee, and do what thou wilt with me, only draw me closer to thyself, that as thou hast given me the best, thou mayst be my best." Amen and Amen.

SORROW FOR THE DEPARTED VINDICATED

REV. J. W. PEARSON, A.M.

ST. MARK'S CHURCH, PENTONVILLE, OCTOBER 9, 1836*.

"And all wept, and bewailed her: but he said, Weep not; she is not dead, but sleepeth.
LUKE, viii. 52.

WITH the interesting story of which our text contains the particulars, you are all, no doubt, familiar. Jesus Christ had acceded, with his wonted benevolence, to the urgent entreaties of one Jairus, a considerable man among the Jews, that he would accompany him home to heal his young and only daughter, who seemed at the point of death. Their progress, however, was retarded by the multitudes which thronged the path, and by the attention of the Saviour to an afflicted woman whom he stopped to cure as he passed along. Owing to these interruptions they had not yet arrived, when a messenger came to apprise Jairus that his daughter had expired, and the aid of the great Physician would come too late. But the Lord Jesus at once assured the broken-hearted father, and then proceeded to the house. On entering the room where the corpse lay, a melancholy scene presented itself: the relations of the deceased were all assembled, weeping and bewailing her. Moved with this spectacle of woe, the compassionate Saviour addressed them in the latter words of our text, "Weep not; she is not dead, but sleepeth."

Having given this brief outline of the circumstances which introduce my text, I have done with the narrative in the Gospel. You know, brethren, the solemn event which occasions my appearance before you this morning; and I conceive, that I shall best discharge my office and meet your expectations, by devoting the bulk of my discourse to an account of our departed friend, in hope that you may gain from the humble sketch a lesson of piety and wisdom.

I shall, however, premise a few remarks in vindication of the tears that are often shed over the tomb of deceased friends and relations; and you shall not be dismissed without a word of consolation derived

* Funeral Sermon for the late Mrs. Mortimer, wife of the REV. T. MORTIMER, B.D.

from the Christian's prospect of an immediate entrance into rest, to be followed, ere long, by a glorious resurrection of the body, and by the fulness of life everlasting. Heavenly Spirit, help us; for all our sufficiency is of thee.

The first point to which I would call your attention is this: *that our Lord's address is not to be taken for any thing like reproof of the grief evinced by the mourners around him.* Their sorrow *may* have been intemperate; it *may* have been mingled with feelings which piety disclaims—feelings of impatience and anger under this providential visitation. But such a conclusion cannot fairly be drawn from our Lord's words, the meaning of which is to be sought in the sentence immediately following: "She is not dead, but sleepeth." He does not, you will take notice, reproach the mourners with culpable sorrow, but he cheers them that its cause is on the point of being removed. Yes, truly, the blessed Jesus was a man of like passions with ourselves, except that sin never mingled with them; and on more than one occasion, he allowed himself to discover the tenderest sensibilities for the benevolent purpose of consolation, and thus proving to his people, that it was not required of them to smother their affections, and violently to force the anguish from their hearts. There is scarcely a verse in the New Testament which has brought more relief to the hearts of mourners than the shortest in the volume: "Jesus wept." He wept over the grave of his friend Lazarus; he wept on witnessing the agony of the two desolate sisters: affection for this once happy family was, I doubt not, the principal, if not the sole cause, of the Redeemer's groans and tears: and I am content to look no further; I view with no complacency the ingenuity that is sometimes exerted to detect more subtle, and, what are termed, more *spiritual* reasons, for this beautiful effusion of tenderness. O no; our Redeemer was a man like ourselves, and he felt and acted accordingly. It is natural to weep over the breathless remains of beloved connexions: it is natural to feel a pang when the dearest ties, strengthened by many a tender association, are for ever snapped asunder: it is natural to sit down and weep when the eye that used to beam kindness and love upon us, is closed in death; when the hand which has a hundred times pressed ours in warm friendship, is cold and stiff, and makes no return to the kindest grasp; and when that heart is motionless which has long beat in perfect unison with ours. If this is natural, brethren, then it cannot be wrong in the abstract; and, we are sure, that it is a pure impulse of our nature, because, had it been a sinful infirmity,

it could never have appeared in Christ Jesus. Your tears and sorrows, when they flow from natural grief, will not displease your heavenly Father, and will be healthful to yourselves, provided they are sanctified with the spirit of our great Master, who, in giving vent to the pangs which almost tore his heart in sunder, still exclaimed with the purest devotion, "Abba, Father; not my will, but thine, be done."

I observe, next, *that sorrow*, especially that which springs from family bereavements, *is one of our Lord's approved instruments for our sanctification*. Thus he visited Abraham, the father of the faithful, and Jacob, and Job, and David, and many other of his saints. It is certain, I think, that nearly all whom God proposes to carry to a high point of sanctity and spiritual efficiency, are passed through this troubled furnace, heated seven times more than common. Instead, therefore, of wrapping ourselves up in stoical apathy, or striving to drown sorrow by drowning thought and reflection, we should meet the blow, and endeavour to realize its gracious intention. Have you, my dear hearers, been thus chastened? Has the desire of your tears been taken away with a stroke? Has the lonely grave closed upon your sight your friend, your brother, your sister, the wife of your bosom, the child of your old age? Then God by that affliction has called upon you to weep. O, lament: look sorrow in the face; regard it as an angel sent to admonish you (there is nothing really magnanimous in braving it), to induce you to ascertain its design and purport, and to co-operate with God. Accordingly, this is the aim of true Christian philosophy; and if it be your aim, the wisdom that is from above will help you. To pursue another course were neither dutiful nor wise. When God smites, he means that we should feel. Should you therefore succeed, once or more, in eluding the smart, which for some good purpose the scourge was intended to produce, God may judge it right to smite you again more heavily, unless he should decide on the dreadful alternative of leaving you to that obduracy which defies correction. "They have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return:" "why should they be stricken any more?" On the principle, then, that a foolish heart often learns in the house of mourning, is there freed from earthly vanities, and cleansed from base affections, and made to see that Jesus Christ is the only God; on this principle, I would dissuade you from being in haste to draw from the sorrow which is felt more than the legitimate fruit of divine chastisement. No; rather keep it in your memory, not to brood over it in sullen

despondency, but as a salutary, though bitter medicine, a sharp, but a monitory thorn. Detain it till it hath, by God's blessing, accomplished its proper end, of impressing you with more spiritual views of man's sinfulness and misery, and of drawing your souls from temporal things to things eternal.

Once more: we are justified in weeping *when eminent servants of God are removed*. It was a heavy charge against the Jews in Isaiah's days, that when "the righteous were taken away, no man laid it to heart." To see with unconcern the removal of those who are the spiritual salt of the earth, the extinction of those lights by which the Lord is glorified, and his children advantaged, would argue a sad want of devout sensibility in ourselves. And, surely, honour is due from us to those whom God has honoured. It is on record, that the children of Israel wept for Moses, on the plains of Moab, forty days. The same people united in lamenting over Samuel. And in 2 Chronicles, after the statement, that all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah, it is expressly added, that Jeremiah lamented for him. A holy prophet is deeply affected, and testifies his grief, when a gracious king, a friend to religion and the state, is cut off.

I am aware that it is the prerogative of almighty wisdom to deduce good eventually from the stroke which deprives the church of some noble pillar or some beautiful ornament. That stroke, however, is not the less a calamity in itself, and sometimes is a sign of God's special wrath against a people who have not appreciated the blessing. Have none of us reason to reflect upon ourselves for having turned to little account the converse and example of some excellent Christian who was long permitted to go before us like a guiding star? Have we not slighted that guidance, and turned our faces from that brightness, because error was more to our taste than truth, and darkness more convenient than light? O, the bitterness of that compunction which pierces the hearts of wayward children like a two-edged sword, when the pious parent, the guide of their youth, whose wings have been long spread over them, is snatched from their side before his tried and favoured tenderness has met with any regard! And how sharp the remorse of many individuals, in a Christian congregation, when deprived of the minister who had poured out his very soul for them in the awful dispensation of the Gospel, while they continued hard and impenitent! Surely, such recollections may well provoke tears, and sobs, and wringing of hands. The fountain that God opened for your refreshment has ceased to flow before you have filled your vessels with its water: and to make up the advan-

tages which you have so deservedly forfeited, may not accord with the wise arrangements of a God most just, most holy.

But I forbear reaping the useful lessons suggested by our text ; and I turn to the sad event that has covered the parish with mourning. I know the consolations with which that event is encompassed : still I must call it sad ; for when has a death occurred in our neighbourhood which has been felt as a greater disaster, or drawn forth more genuine sorrow ? Most truly can it be affirmed, not with respect to the members of one family only, but to a vast population, that all wept and bewailed her. I well remember when our beloved friend, at the close of the last and the beginning of the present year, was in the crisis of a malady that was hourly expected to prove fatal—I well remember how deep a sympathy for her family, and how acute a sensibility to your own threatened loss, were universally displayed. It seemed as if there was a temporary suspension of all ordinary interests, a pause in the common business and bustle of life ; while every one waited in breathless anxiety to see which way the wavering balance would ultimately turn. But no, it was not a *breathless* anxiety, for thousands of prayers were incessantly breathed up to the throne of grace ; and they did obtain a respite, which to some of you will hardly appear a mercy, but which I know has been an unspeakable mercy, and to have answered important ends. To this assertion, the individual who can best pronounce on its truth, is he on whom this dispensation has fallen with its keenest edge, and for whom you must earnestly pray without ceasing that he may be strengthened and sanctified under it. To this assertion, your honoured minister, my beloved and valued friend, will emphatically set his seal.

But to render this affliction a source of religious benefit, I must remind you of the qualities and conduct which draw down on our departed sister so extraordinary a measure of respect and affection. And in doing this I shall be forced to attempt the language of eulogy : be it far from me to bestow upon the portrait a single line or hue not taken from the life ; but who can delineate an eminent Christian, without exhibiting a form of singular beauty ? It is impossible, since the Christian's character is the impress of God's own Spirit, and a likeness—faint and defective, indeed, yet a real likeness—of Jesus Christ. For those who are rich in spiritual gifts to think humbly of themselves, is seemly and right ; but it becomes those, amidst their pious conversation, to glorify God even then. It is, moreover, incumbent on ministers of religion, to reflect on a

dark, ungodly world, the rays of such spiritual luminaries as have just sunk below the horizon: and this will be most generally useful when the departed one has filled a private station, and was not, in the scale of worldly estimation, an extraordinary person. When the effects of pure and undefiled religion on such persons are displayed, a model is set up, which numbers may try to imitate with benefit. Many of you, my dear hearers, might form yourselves, to a considerable extent, by the pattern of her whom we have lost: there is nothing, I mean in externals, to make it impracticable.

I advert, in the first place, to the *humility* of this admirable woman, for that lay at the root of, and richly nourished, all her other graces. Her self-abasement before God can be known to God only; but its counterpart (or shall I rather say its *fruit*?) in that lowliness of mind which gives its tone to the whole social life, and makes us really to esteem others better than ourselves, in her was exceedingly conspicuous. We meet sometimes with a *feigned* humility, which is ill-favoured: at other times we meet with a humility, sincere, it may be presumed, yet sustained with so much labour and effort, that it can hardly be termed lovely. But when it sits upon a person quite naturally, as if it actually corresponded with the inward frame and secret movements of the soul, O then it is indeed a rich adorning!

Of our dear sister's original temper I know little, and I have not forgotten that pride is born with us, and adheres tenaciously to our faulty nature: but this I can safely affirm, that for many years humility had been so wrought into her soul by the Holy Ghost, that it had all the agreeable bearing of a native quality. The rare simplicity of her character struck every one on the slightest acquaintance; and I recollect to have said of her, after our first interview, many years ago, "Truly this is an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile:" and the impression was confirmed by every subsequent communication. There was a transparent candour in all her proceedings, which made it impossible to suspect her of any thing that wore in her heart a disguise: there was not a tinge of falsehood in her composition.

Perhaps I speak too strongly: I may be reminded how much of deceit there is in the human heart at best; and therefore some modification of my statement may be called for. But I do believe that hers was a mind exempt, in no ordinary degree, from obliquity of motive; and going straight forward in its objects in the fear of the Lord. I do believe that, as far as is compatible with human perfection, she was a model of ingenuousness and truth. Where such simplicity of

character exists, there can hardly be much *selfishness*; and those most thoroughly intimate with our deceased friend, and who stood in the most convenient position for detecting this master vice, have declared that no one less under this sin ever came within their observation. Her dearest connexion said to me, that were he called on to name the virtue by which she was chiefly characterized, he would do it in these words: "She pleased not herself."

Some affecting instances that have come to my knowledge, of her utter disregard of self-indulgence, I would here have gladly introduced, were I not withheld by the reverence due to domestic privacy. No sacrifice appeared too great—I had almost said, appeared any sacrifice at all—if recommended and imperatively prescribed by duty and conscience. Her benevolent and assiduous attentions to the poor and afflicted were unremitting; to their bodies and to their souls she acted the part of a tender mother. On this feature of her character, however, it is unnecessary for me to expatiate, to you who have witnessed her practice as a district visitor, and recollect how her alms, and prayer, and counsel, and comfort, went hand in hand. You are well aware that she followed in the track of that Saviour who went about doing good, and that she aspired to nothing more than to be the channel of great mercies to all with whom she was connected.

But can you overlook *the singular kindness of her disposition*? Some people are benevolent without being kind, and the absence of the latter quality detracts not a little from the value of the former. She was both. Her manifest solicitude to make all about her happy, gained every heart, and went far to accomplish its object. "I found her always my friend," said one of her domestics, "as well as my mistress." And this benignant temper shewed itself in a thousand ways. She was remarkable for sympathy with others, not in sorrow only, but likewise in joy: and to rejoice with the prosperous is a higher test of generous love, than to condole with the afflicted. Now this virtue was remarkably hers. Under sharp domestic trials she would please herself with the reflection that this and that person were exempt from it, and would exclaim with a smile of grateful joy, "What a mercy it is that the burden we are bearing has not fallen on those dear friends!" I know those who can testify, from ample experience, that it were difficult to imagine her superior in the qualifications of a friend—such steady attachment, such disinterestedness, such equability of temper, such indulgent tenderness.

Another exercise of charity with which she was familiar—and

which is always arduous, especially to females of a silent, timid disposition—was, the reconciling of persons who were at variance; she was eminently a *peacemaker*; and in this employment she would expose herself to ridicule, which is well known by whoever takes this walk of benevolence to be the usual recompense of pacific mediation. Still she persevered; her blessed Lord hath enjoined it. Her abhorrence of strife, and her desire to see others happy, carried her through the labour of love, which was crowned in several instances with a success that must be mainly attributed to her unquestionable purity of purpose.

Now bear in mind, my brethren, that our sister was not a woman of brilliant parts and showy accomplishments. Excellent sense, and a clear, decisive judgment, arising very much from that singleness of heart and that absence of all petty feeling on which I have already dwelt, she did indeed possess; and her mind was stored with much valuable and well-adjusted knowledge. Still there was nothing in her general discourse and manner to dazzle and captivate, except what sprung from the exquisite charm of her moral character. It was the meekness of wisdom impersonated in her that gave her a peculiar facility of winning hearts to herself first, and then to God.

Now why am I at pains to exhibit her under this aspect? It is because I am most desirous to impress on you that nothing renders a person so amiable, so attractive, as religion; I mean, the pure religion of Jesus Christ, the religion of humility, of gentleness, and love. Where the spirit of our blessed Lord is produced, like a fragrant ointment, over the whole character—when it dwells in the heart, and is incorporated with all the words and actions, it will produce, not the manners of the world, indeed, but a more refined and noble result. Such a religion, so genuine and consistent, impresses those who come in connexion with it most beneficially. Perhaps they can hardly tell what it was that touched and overcame them: they cannot recal any striking words, or any remarkable action: yet the combined effect, the resulting influence is wonderful. The difference between such a mind and one of the ordinary stamp is strongly felt; and thus, perhaps, a service is rendered to the cause of the Gospel and of souls, beyond what is achieved by far higher endowments, and a more fervid zeal, where there is not the same entireness of Christian principle, and where the heart and the outward man are not equally bright with the lustre of holiness.

It were inconceivable that such a woman as I have been describing should not excel in *the relations of a wife and a mother*

On the former of these particulars, her conjugal virtues, I shall not, for obvious reasons, enter at large : but I am not apprehensive of being charged by my dear friend, her afflicted but rejoicing husband, with indelicacy or a breach of confidence, if I mention, that, both in her lifetime and since her decease, he has declared to me with many tears, that he deemed himself unworthy so saintly a wife, and that he deeply felt how much his responsibility to God was increased by the advantage he had many years enjoyed of having such a helpmate—one so kind and judicious, so dead to the world, so ripe in Christian knowledge and holiness, and whose spirit was so constantly in frame for heavenly feelings. How ardently she was attached to him was evinced throughout their union, and was testified in a way most affectingly gratifying to him on her death-bed. Yet much as she delighted in his society, she delighted more to go forth in the service of his Master, and to gird on (so to speak), by her counsels and encouragements, his spiritual armour ; and she would willingly consent to pass weeks and months from him when the higher claims of evangelical duty called him away.

In the management of her children I am told that she was singularly happy ; and this I can easily believe of one whose character is so appropriately described in that sentiment of Solomon, when speaking of a virtuous matron : “She openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness.” But this is not the place for detailing her plan of education ; I would only say that it was begun, continued, and ended, in the Lord. Nothing more can be desired or asked for those dear children than to see them such as their mother’s prayers and teaching would make them.

But our time, not our subject, is nearly exhausted, and I must hasten to the concluding stage of her pilgrimage. I will first inform you, however, that having been content in early youth with that superficial religion which is misnamed *Christianity*, she was mercifully led, by the perusal of one of Mrs. Hannah Moore’s works, to a more scriptural view of her state before God, and her relation to him in Christ Jesus. Not long after this important change she was united to your dear minister—whose praise let the church speak, and not a private friend : and while shedding upon him the most benevolent influence, she grew up beneath his shadow to that proficiency in the divine life for which we have been glorifying God. Observe, my friends, for this is a capital point—she was

from first to last of her religious profession, a diligent and progressive Christian. She walked closely with God by patient continuance in well-doing. In common with the faithful she took delight in her Bible, in public worship, in the communion of Christ's body, and in secret intercourse with him in prayer: but what she possessed in common with few Christians was, that predominant principle which led her uniformly, and one may say instinctively, to take the course pointed out by religion, when all human considerations were against it. She was of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord.

Now this I take to be the secret of that unclouded peace which illumined her chamber. It is not so much, I have been led to believe—it is not so much those who have achieved the greatest feats, and made the most notable sacrifices on behalf of the Gospel, that assurance is granted on their death-bed. As to those, perhaps humbler individuals, who have trod the narrow way with the fewest deviations, and with most of that simplicity of spirit, that singleness of love, which in God's sight is of great price; these are the Christians who are enabled to say, as our sainted friend did to one who inquired whether she was happy, “O! perfectly happy; no fear, no care, no doubt.”

I find, that from the time of her severe attack in the winter, she felt persuaded that her life was drawing to its close; and nothing but an habitual sentiment of submission to the divine will prevented her from praying that it might be so. Yes, truly, she had a desire to depart and to be with Christ, as better far than remaining here; though her journey, as she gratefully owned, was sweetened with many mercies. She had been long concerned about the welfare of sinners; but now, when she experienced the unspeakable importance of having “a good hope through grace,” this holy passion of her soul flamed forth with redoubled energy. While resident in a country village, to which the physician had sent her, to try what the pure air would do to revive the expiring ashes, she was continually addressing herself to one and the other on the things that accompany salvation, explaining the grounds of her own confidence, and exhorting them not to postpone the preparation for a dying hour. Here, also, she wrote very faithful and touching letters to some of her nearest kindred, for whose spiritual improvement she was deeply solicitous. Having been accustomed to put herself in the lowest place, she was quite overcome with the assiduities of the friend under whose roof she spent a few weeks after her removal from Dorking, and would

shed tears at the many tokens of affection which she received. But her heart yearned for home, and she earnestly desired that it might be her last earthly resting-place before her flight to heaven. This desire was granted, and nothing could be more beautiful than the simple, easy, cheerful manner, in which she gave herself to household duties, and to making provision for the comfort of her family, so soon to be deprived of her maternal superintendence: the welfare of others still engrossed her then. Do you wonder at her being able, when standing on the verge of eternity, to busy herself with her ordinary duties, and with the utmost calmness to make arrangements which all hinged on the fact, that a few weeks or days must terminate her earthly course? Is this a mystery that you cannot solve? I will give you the solution. Death was not strange or terrible to her: at the outset of her Christian life, the thought of death used to agitate her; but having found the perfect peace that is hid in Christ Jesus, she came at length to regard death as the friend who was to usher her into the presence of her God and Saviour. It was not on her own virtues and graces that she rested; she was fixed by faith on the foundation laid in Zion, the atonement of the cross.

Dear brethren, if I have enlarged on her excellences in this discourse, it has not been for the purpose of clothing a fellow-sinner with unmerited honours, but to show what a mighty efficacy resides in true religion, and what dignity God imparts to frail earthen vessels by the spirit of his Son. Our dear sister saw herself to be nothing; she loathed whatever savoured of self-righteousness: her rejoicing was that in Christ, and him crucified, she had found wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

One word on *the closing scene*. When she perceived herself actually dying, her joy was very great. Her Father's purpose to receive her to himself he now certified, and it was now observed he filled her soul with the blissful prospect. Not many hours previous to her dissolution, she inquired whether she might count on being in heaven before night, and seemed rather disappointed on being told that her release could not be looked for so soon. But God was more gracious to her than appearances allowed us to expect. And now occurred a circumstance extremely affecting, and that invests with a sort of sacredness the death-bed of this eminent Christian. About a quarter past six on Friday, the thirtieth of last month, she suddenly turned to her attendants, and with an earnest look, and with all the power of voice she could summon, exclaimed, "Sing;

sing; 'why don't you begin to sing?" In compliance with her repeated desire they began the hymn,

"Come, let us join our cheerful songs,
With angels round the throne:"

and though herself no singer, yet she made almost supernatural efforts to articulate the words, and to give out that melody of her voice with which her heart was overflowing. Brethren, what shall we say? Can we help supposing that an angel's voice had already reached her ears, a note of those blessed anthems in which she was just about to join? I presume not to dogmatize on this mysterious subject; but my soul owns little communion with those who scoff at the opinion, that God does, on some rare occasions, stoop very near to his dying children, indulge them with a glimpse of that world to which they are in the act of transition, and grant them before they are quite delivered from the burden of the flesh to enter the porch of heaven. So many accounts have been handed down to us of saints who are said to have been favoured with similar manifestations, that I cannot assent to that unkind philosophy which rejects them all as fables and delusions. The result, however, in the case before us, of this remarkable effort to sing the praises of God, was most happy, and you will recognise in it the tender loving-kindness of the Lord. Great fears had been entertained that our dear friend's last struggle might prove very protracted and painful; but after singing two stanzas of the hymn she had called for, she seemed quite exhausted: the music ceased; she turned her head on the pillow, and her hand was clasped in her husband's, when a gentle sigh escaped her, and in that sigh her spirit mounted up to God. Happy saint! Thy struggle was finished, thy heavenly rest attained! With thy last breath, and in the final agony of nature, thou hadst been sending up hosannahs to the Lamb; and in a moment thou wast joined to that innumerable company of the church triumphant, which is evermore singing in the fulness of that bliss which is enjoyed through the blood of the Redeemer, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

My dear hearers, we have all wept and bewailed her. We have wept for our own severe loss, but we sorrow not as those without hope, for we know that she fell asleep in Jesus; and he watches over her precious dust, and will come in due time to wake her out of sleep. Let us dry up our tears, and see her, sleeping in the grave indeed as to her mortal body, but alive to God in her spirit,

crowned with immortality and glory. Yes she has rested from her labours; her conflict with sin and Satan is ended; she has traversed this vale of tears; she has reached the heavenly Canaan; she has put off her garments of corruption, and in the bosom of her Saviour she awaits the consummation of her blessedness on the morning of the resurrection. She is not dead, or if dead, yet speaks with the strong endearing voice of her holy example. By that she tells you that true religion is true happiness: she tells you that nothing but a pious life can ensure a peaceful end: she tells you that a spiritual walk is the secret of being real benefactors to mankind, and of converting natural endowments, not greatly exceeding the common standard, to qualities most useful and loving, the most noble and sublime.

I have sometimes noticed epitaphs in our church-yards, in which the deceased are made to exhort their friends not to weep for them; and I could not repress a bitter sigh, when I thought within myself, "Alas! it may be that some whose remains lie beneath these grave-stones are now in a condition the most pitiable. It may be that we could not bewail them enough, though we wept tears of blood: for unless they lived in friendship with Christ they cannot have fallen asleep with him: and then where are they?" But as I stood by the grave of our dear sister yesterday, how different my feelings! For in her divine grace shone so brightly, and had so nearly moulded her into the image of Immanuel, that to doubt of her being a child of God were impossible. And therefore how much soever we deplore our loss, we cannot weep for her. O no; let us rejoice and be glad: let us adore that omnipotent goodness which enabled her so to live as puts it beyond a question that she is now in Paradise: and let us pray for grace so to follow her steps in the path of evangelical obedience, that, when the quick and dead are gathered together before the judgment-seat, we all, being found of one spirit with her, may be united to her in glory!

EVERY BAPTIZED MAN A PRIEST OF GOD.

REV. H. MELVILL, B.D.

ST. BRIDE'S CHURCH, FLEET STREET, OCTOBER 16, 1836*.

“ But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people—that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.”—1 PETER, ii. 9.

WE shall not attempt, on the present occasion, to examine at length each of the titles by which the apostle here designates the Christian community. This would be to propose far more than could be compassed in a single discourse; and we shall therefore confine your attention to such part as seems the best adapted to move you to exertion and liberality in the service of your God.

You observe that St. Peter represents it as strictly the design of all the privileges into which Christians were admitted, that they should “ show forth the praises ” of God. If they were placed in so noble a position, and endowed with advantages so illustrious, that they might be designated as “ a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people,” it was not that they might live an inactive life, and repose idly on their blessings; it was rather that they might be “ as lights in a world ” “ sitting in darkness,” and exhibit the glories of the great Author of redemption. And, of course, if this might be affirmed when Christians were described by an accumulation of titles, it must be equally true when any one title is detached from the rest. If, for example, we simply address you as “ a royal priesthood,” if we make good your claim as Christians to an office which unites the regal and the sacerdotal, we shall be thoroughly justified from our text, in using the fact that you are “ a royal priesthood,” as a motive to your being diligent in “ showing forth ” God’s praises.

It is not an ordinary cause which we have this day undertaken to advocate. We are not to appeal to you on behalf of a school or a hospital. We are to entreat you to come forward with a more than common liberality, and provide funds for the erection of a new

* In aid of the fund for building a New Church.

church in this important and populous parish. The school or the hospital brings glory to God; and therefore, after proving you “a royal priesthood,” we might justly demand from you, that you should support such institutions. But a church, in which the pure Gospel may be preached, and the Christian sacraments duly administered, to a population which at present has little or no access to the public means of grace—assuredly in providing this, you “show forth,” in a far higher degree, the praises of God. And therefore, whatever the obligation imposed on you by your being “a royal priesthood,” it never can be more binding than when a sanctuary is to be reared for those perishing in ignorance.

We waive, however, for the present, further reference to the work towards which we are to solicit your contributions; and we proceed to discourse to you on that very remarkable title, “a royal priesthood,” which we have selected from those which St. Peter gives as descriptive of Christians. We can hardly doubt, that, in applying these titles, the apostle refers to a promise, which God made through Moses to the Jews: “If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.” “A royal priesthood” corresponds accurately to “a kingdom of priests,” whilst in both cases “an holy nation” follows the title. And since both Moses and the apostle clearly connect the “royal priesthood,” or the being “a kingdom of priests,” with the being “a peculiar people,” we seem warranted in concluding that it is the circumstance of being separated by religious privileges from the rest of the world which gives the power and opportunity of assuming and discharging sacerdotal functions.

This will sufficiently indicate what we desire to make our chief subject of discourse; and we now, therefore, proceed to address you, in the first place, on the fact that the Christian Church ought to be “a kingdom of priests,” or “a royal priesthood,” and, in the second place, on the consequences which would follow if the priestly character were thus universally recognized.

Now it is amongst the most common, and certainly not the least dangerous, of the mistakes of the present day, to identify the *church* with the *clergy*, as though the laity were not to the full one of its constituent parts. If you gather the popular opinion from the popular discourse, you must conclude that the church is regarded

as a corporation, made up of bishops, priests, and deacons, but including absolutely none who do not bear one of those titles. Our common forms of speech both encourage and prove the mistake; for we speak of a man as “designed for the church” when preparing for the clerical profession, and as “entering the church” when he takes holy orders. And if it were a mere *verbal* inaccuracy, it might be scarcely worth our while to point it out and correct it: but there is a vast deal more than an impropriety of speech; for from talking of the church as though composed wholly of the *clergy*, men come practically to forget that it is composed equally of the *laity*: and, when once this is forgotten, their own duties will be forgotten; and we shall hear of laymen coming forward in support of the church, just as though they were the generous and chivalrous defenders of a cause which had no claims for their succour, in place of being bound, by their own position and their own vows, to uphold that of which they are sworn members.

The thing, therefore, of which we would remind you is, that I did not enter the church when I took holy orders, and a bishop set me solemnly apart as a minister of the sanctuary: I entered the church when my parents and sponsors brought me to the priest, and he baptized me in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. I have never been made more actually a member of the Christian Church than I was then: and though ordination, with its mysterious sacredness, gave me special duties to perform in the church, on which otherwise I could not have entered, yet it did not, and it could not, engraft me more thoroughly into the church, nor give me a stricter fellowship than I already possessed. It follows, therefore, that every one of you, if he have duly received Christian baptism, is as thoroughly a member of the church as myself, who have been appointed to ministering in holy things. I am indeed a *minister* of the church, but not on that account more a *member* of the church than any of those amongst whom I officiate.

And so soon as you possess yourselves of this, the correct and simple idea of the church, you must perceive the propriety of designating a Christian community as “a kingdom of priests,” or “a royal priesthood.” We are not speaking of what that community may be by *practice*, but only of what it is by *profession*; of what it *ought* to be, and of what it *would* be, if it acted faithfully up to the obligations taken on itself. When settled in Canaan, the Jews were far enough from proving their right to the title which

was promised them in the words which we quoted from Moses: they turned aside after false gods, and dishonoured, in place of magnifying, the name of Jehovah. But supposing them to have been a nation of righteous men, not only *outwardly* in covenant with God, but consecrated *in heart* to his service; then it is easy to perceive that they would have stood, to all surrounding countries, in the very position in which the tribe of Levi stood to themselves; they would have been witnesses for the Almighty to the rest of the world, standing in the midst of the vast temple of the earth, and instructing the ignorant in the mysteries of truth: and as the family of Aaron officiated in the presence of the children of Israel, directing and upholding the true worship of God, and delivering intimations of his will, so would the children of Israel, as a body, have officiated in the presence of the whole heathen world, and their land would have been as an altar, whence pure incense went up in the sight of other tribes of human kind: and thus would they have been a nation, as manifestly set apart and devoted to God, as the tribe invested with the Levitical priesthood; discharging to all the inhabitants of the earth the mighty functions of teacher and guide. And all we ask of you is, whether, if the Jews had assumed this position—the position for which God designed them, and to which he strove to lead them—they would not have been what was promised as the reward of their obedience, “a royal priesthood,” or “a kingdom of priests?”

But what the Jewish nation might have been, that may the Christian Church be—that *would* it be if every member acted up to the vows which were made at his baptism. Let a parish of *nominal* Christians be converted into a parish of *real* Christians, so that there should not be one within its circuit who did not adorn the doctrine of the Gospel; and what should we have but a parish of priests to the high and living God? We call it a *parish of priests*, because we can feel that it would be as a kind of little sanctuary in the midst of a country or city, which might elsewhere be deformed by great ignorance and profligacy. Just as, in the midst of this parish itself, would rise its church, more sacred than any other structure, so would the parish stand in the midst of surrounding parishes, a holier spot, and fuller of the presence of Deity. And as fresh lessons in the truths of religion would be continually delivered to the dwellers in this parish, from their own pulpit and by their own priests, so would those dwellers themselves be examples and instructors to all by whom they were encompassed, and thus

practically discharge a noble part of the ministerial office. There would be no trenching upon functions which belong exclusively to men who have been ordained to the service of the temple; but nevertheless there would be that fine and thorough exhibition of Christianity, which is amongst the most powerful of preaching, and that noble presentation of every energy to God, which is far above the costliest of sacrifices and burnt-offerings. And without dealing in exaggerated terms, we should not hesitate to declare of the parish we have described, that it would be as an altar, or rather a shrine, from which would issue divine messages to every neighbouring district; and that every dweller in this parish, seeing that his individual piety contributed to the general demonstration of godliness, might be regarded as standing at that shrine, with all the insignia and all the solemnity of the priesthood. Such would be the aspect and the bearing of a whole parish of real Christians; of men who felt (for this is the simple account of the matter) that, as members of the Christian Church, they were bound to be to the rest of mankind exactly what the ministers of Christ are to them.

And you will easily see that, in passing from *a parish* to *a nation*, we introduce no change into our argument; we only enlarge its application; for a kingdom is to other kingdoms what a parish is to other parishes. We cannot tell you what a spectacle it would be in the midst of the earth, if any one people, as a body, acted on the principles, and fulfilled the vows, of Christianity: but we are sure that no better title than that of our text could be given to such a people. You know that, however the influences of Christianity may have been counteracted by the corruptions of the nature with which it has to deal, they are admirably adapted to promote present happiness, so that, if allowed full scope, they would banish all discord, and rapidly cover a land with peaceful and contented families. It seems to us impossible, that a thoroughly Christian nation should do otherwise than advance with the greatest speed to the summit of prosperity: for having in itself none of those causes of weakness and dissension which must exist wherever vice pervades great masses of a population, it would concentrate unbroken energies on every undertaking; and seeking always the guidance of God, and adventuring on nothing in its own strength, would never be engaged in what might issue disastrously. And the prosperity of the kingdom would immediately draw upon it the notice of the whole world; and then would its Christianity, the producing cause of its prosperity, become the object of universal attention. The men

of other lands would observe, with amazement and admiration, what a charter of purest liberty had been framed from the Bible; what a high road to all that is stable in civil institutions, splendid in national greatness, and beautiful in domestic relations, had been found by those who walked only by the light of God's word. It must, therefore, come to pass, that the nation in question would be as a temple to all surrounding tribes, and that the result would be the same as though from the east and west, from the north and south, men flocked to its portals, that they might receive instruction from a consecrated priesthood.

Neither is it only through the example they would set, and the exhibition they would furnish of the beneficial power of Christianity, that the inhabitants of this country would be as the priests of the Most High. You cannot doubt that such a nation would be, in the largest sense, a missionary nation, that its ruling desire would be to procure admission to the Gospel in all districts of the earth. Conscious of the inestimable blessing which Christianity had proved to its own families, and moved by a sense of freely giving what it had freely received, this people would not send forth a single ship on any enterprize of commerce, without making it also a vehicle for transmitting the principles of religion; and as the stately thing walked the waters, to freight itself with the produce of far-off climes, it would carry the sowers of that seed of life which is to restore the verdure to a fallen creation.

We are not aware that we, in the least degree, overdraw the deportment and conduct of a people, amongst whom godliness should universally prevail; we introduce no feature which would not be brought, as we think, into the sketch of every painter who knows what Christianity is, and who supposes it to reign in every household and in every heart; and if you combine these features, you will find no more appropriate title than that furnished by our text for the people whose portrait the combination would give. O, we again say, of the land in whose every habitation the religion of Jesus had thorough dominion, that it would be as a great temple in the midst of the earth, in whose recesses God visibly dwelt, and from whose altars ascended flames which fixed the gaze of men of other tribes. If you could occupy that land with the walls of one mighty sanctuary, and crown them with a dome whose span should be that of the over-arching sky, and bring within them the mysterious shekinah that hallowed the structure which Solomon reared; there would not be so sublime an edifice, and so manifest an indwelling of Deity, as

when the temple is builded of all the hearts in the land, and the Most High shines himself in the secrecies of every spirit. And what shall we say of the dwellers in such a land, of those who inhabit the temple which, as it were, they constitute? Serving God with all the assiduousness of a cheerful and unwearied devotion, and acting in their every proceeding on the principles of religion, they are as "stewards of the mysteries of the kingdom," and dispense the law, and publish the proclamation. Earnest in imparting the privileges they enjoy, and desiring to show their gratitude by enlarging, if possible, the kingdom of the Redeemer, they are as ministers of the faith, and spread far and wide the offer of salvation. And thus are they filling to surrounding nations the very office which is filled to themselves by those whose special business it is to teach in their churches; they are keeping up a sacred fire on the altar, that those "sitting in darkness" may "see a great light;" they are blowing the silver trumpet of the jubilee, that those ready to perish may hear it and live; they are offering themselves a living sacrifice to the Almighty, that pagans may learn to cast their idols to the moles and to the bats. And what then is to be said of them, as their practical Christianity thus turns their country into one magnificent sanctuary, from whose pulpit the Gospel-summons goes forth to all the ends of the earth, and whose walls so echo the praises of the Saviour, that distant islands are roused by the symphony—what is to be said, but that in them are fulfilled the words of Jesus Christ by the apostle, and that they are, emphatically, "a royal priesthood," or "a kingdom of priests?"

Now you will sufficiently gather from what has been advanced, that Christian nations stand in the same position, taken with heathen nations, as Christian ministers to Christian congregations; they have much the same duties to perform, the same power of witnessing for God, the same opportunities of supporting the great cause of truth. And what we most earnestly wish to impress upon your minds is, that every Christian man, every man who has been received by baptism into the Christian church, has been invested with a priestly office, and shall be hereafter dealt with according to the manner in which that office was discharged. If the church, as a body, is to be a kingdom of priests, it follows, that every member of that church, in his individual capacity, can be nothing less than a priest. And when you demand the sense in which this can be true, we do not tell you, that every Christian man is to be a priest to other Christian men; for in each Christian church there is a conse-

crated priesthood, whose special office it is to minister to their fellow-Christians; but we do tell you, that what the clergyman is to you, that should you be to the world. If he be set amongst you as a witness for God and an instructor in truth, you also are set in the midst of the world witnesses for God and instructors in truth. I have, indeed, received a two-fold ordination, and you only a single one; mine that of baptism and the laying on of hands, and yours that of baptism alone; and, we confess, that there are obligations imposed by the double ordination, which are not by the single. But the single ordination, the ordination of baptism, bound you all to the being as “a city set upon a hill,” and thus appointed you, as it were, to a *pulpit*; and to the “letting your light shine before men,” and thus appointed you to an *altar*, on which celestial fire should ever burn brightly. You cannot then avoid the conclusion, that, as members of a Christian church, you are members of “a royal priesthood.” You cannot say, that our text is nothing more than a figurative expression. The priestly office, indeed, is no longer what it was in Jewish times, as regards the *ministers* of the church; but it is not one jot altered as regards the *members*. It is not what it was as regards the *ministers*, because they have not to make atonement by the offering up of sacrifice; but it is what it was as regards the *members*, because their ministrations are still to be those of a holy life, and consistency and steadfastness in the maintenance of truth. And inasmuch as any combination of righteous individuals must, by their example, reprove the wickedness of the world, and, by their influence, do much towards advancing the cause of piety, the apostle only describes what would necessarily be the office discharged, and the aspect borne by a thoroughly Christian community, when he declares us ordained to “a royal priesthood,” that we might “show forth the praises of God.”

But we propose to consider, in the second place, certain of the consequences which would follow, if the priestly character were universally recognized. And here we wish to ply you with practical considerations, to show you what your conduct would be, if you kept steadily in mind your own priestly character.

We begin with observing to you, that the members of the church watch its ministers with singular jealousy, and that faults, which would be comparatively overlooked, if committed by a merchant or a lawyer, are held up to utter execration, when they can be fastened on a clergyman. We are not in the least disposed to plead against

this method of procedure, or to ask for gentler dealing with the offences of the priesthood. We are quite agreed with the most keen-eyed observers of the clerical order, and with the most indignant reprovers of their every inconsistency, that pride, or immorality, or covetousness, is more hateful in a clergyman than in any other; that his profession gives a heinousness to his sin; and that whenever he turns aside from the paths of rectitude and virtue, he may justly be visited with an odium and a scorn, such as were not to be incurred had he been engaged in a less sacred calling. The vows of his baptism were full and energetic, for he bound himself to the renouncing "the world, the flesh, and the devil;" but when his faculties were matured, in the ripeness of his manhood, he voluntarily vowed the yet stronger vows of ordination, bound himself, with all solemnity, as in the presence of God, to make himself an example and a pattern to Christ's flock: and if he be unmindful of these accumulated vows; if a sordid avarice, or the fires of base passions, or the lust of advancement, deform and desecrate one who has thus isolated himself from the world and worldly things; we will not ask you to deal with him by any light measure; we will rather be among the first to own, that there cannot come down upon him a heavier than the just weight of public reprobation; and that if there move one upon the earth who deserves more than another to be a mark for the finger of scorn, it is the perjured priest, who, having sworn to be faithful in the priesthood, joins the worshippers of Mammon, or the slaves of sensuality.

But now let us suppose, men and brethren, that a case of clerical delinquency is engaging the attention of a company of members of the church, and that they are passing an unqualified condemnation on the offender who has flagrantly disgraced the sacred profession. It will not matter what has been the particular character of his offence; but we should like to be placed in the midst of that company, whilst one tongue after another delivered the indignant and sarcastic rebuke. We should not wish to be there in order to arrest or mitigate the vehement condemnation; but we should wish to be there, that when men's feelings were strongly excited, and strongly impressed—the great aggravation of the offence on which they were commenting being that the offender was a priest—we might press them home with the question, Are not *ye* priests? It would be a fine opportunity, just when the bearing the priestly office was deduced as incontrovertible evidence that pride, or covetousness, or immorality, should draw down on an individual unmingled detesta-

tion—it would be a fine opportunity for turning round upon many of the company, who might not themselves be clear in these matters, and saying with Nathan, “*Ye are the men.*” Their answer might be, “We belong to the laity, we belong not to the clergy; and therefore, whatever our sins, they want that special aggravation which, on your own admission, attaches to the crime which we now reprobate and condemn.” But our reply would be, “You may be forgetful of your high calling, you may be *ignorant* of your high calling; but nevertheless, inasmuch as you belong to a Christian church, you belong incontrovertibly to ‘a royal priesthood;’ and if there be avarice amongst you, it is the avarice of a priest; if there be pride amongst you, it is the pride of a priest; if there be sensuality amongst you, it is the sensuality of a priest.”

We would thus take advantage of that very merited scorn of which clerical inconsistency, or clerical profligacy, is sure to be the object. The men who manifest this scorn may be little aware, but it is our duty and our desire to make them aware, that they are passing sentence on themselves, and that all that strong and unmeasured rebuke which they pour on an offending priest is virtually falling on their own heads, unless the power of Christianity be visible in the whole of their conduct. And we are quite persuaded that men vastly underrate, even where they do not wholly overlook, the injury which the vices of any private individual work to the cause of God and religion. They are alive to the injury wrought by the vices of a clergyman; but they shelter themselves under their lay character, and think their own sins comparatively harmless, perhaps comparatively lawful. This is only because they do not or will not observe, that every nominal Christian does his part towards keeping his country from taking its place as a witness for God, and a preacher of righteousness to the yet unevangelized world. O if we have drawn no exaggerated picture of the influence which a nation of real Christians would wield on the surrounding people, we have shewn you that their country would be nothing less than a temple to the whole earth, and themselves the ordained men who held therein the sacerdotal office. And what then is it, but the avarice, and the fraud, and the voluptuousness, and the impiety, which are found amongst the members of the Christian community, that interferes with the ministrations of that community to the tribes which are yet “sitting in darkness?” What is it, in other words, but the fact that the crimes of the priesthood bring disgrace on the religion which they were anointed to teach, that prevents a nominally

Christian people from being the great regenerators of the globe? And have we not, then, a right to come down on every unconverted man amongst you, and to charge him with working that very injury to religion which a clergyman works when notoriously immoral, and all this on the simple principle derived from our text, that it is the high calling of a Christian people to be “a kingdom of priests,” or “a royal priesthood” to the Lord God Almighty.

Now we would impress on you, in bringing our discourse to a conclusion, that you feel nothing what you ought to feel when indignant at hearing of the wickedness of the clergyman. Again and again would we tell you, you are quite right in considering that the circumstance of the man being a priest; lays on him additional obligation to the fleeing every vice, and the practising every virtue; and that where the obligation is disregarded, the blame can hardly be greater than is deserved: but will you also bear in mind that you are yourselves invested with the office of the priesthood; that you cannot sin merely as lawyers, or merchants, or tradesmen; you must sin as *priests*, and therefore incur that heavier condemnation which you are ready enough to award to a man of my profession: The anger which breaks promptly forth on any report of clerical iniquity, will then be equally ready to blaze out in your own case and that because the layman is as much a clergyman to the world as the clergyman is to the church; and you will be more than ever “a peculiar people,” and more than ever on the watch against all that is forbidden by the Gospel of Christ. There could not be the money-grasping, the dishonourable trick, the fraudulent dealing, the pride, the licentiousness, which it is impossible to overlook in a professedly Christian community, if the members of that community regarded their households, and their counting-houses, and their shops, as so many churches in which they had sacred functions to perform, and kept always in mind that a heathen may offend merely as a man, but the Christian must offend as a priest.

And we yet further think, that if you were to regard yourselves as the ordained priests of God, you could not be indolent with respect to any enterprise of Christian philanthropy. We now remind you, from the statement of our text, that you have been appointed to the priesthood on purpose that you may “show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.” And is it not to show forth these praises, to diffuse the knowledge of redemption, that mighty scheme by which

every divine attribute is magnified, and every human want satisfied? If ye be priests, the priests of Christianity, for what end can you have been consecrated, if not that you may disseminate the religion which you have embraced as the true? If it be my part, as a priest to the Christian church, to labour at instructing the ignorant, and confirming the wavering, in the mysteries of our faith; it must be your part, as priests to the world, to labour at providing the means of instruction for the neglected and destitute. It is therefore to men invested with the priestly office, and pledged, by that office, to the devoting themselves and their substance to the great work of propagating Christianity, that we address our appeal on the present occasion. Members of "a royal priesthood," ye must be ready to arise at our summons, and aid in rearing a church in which the Gospel may be preached, and the sacraments administered. There are hundreds perishing around you—perishing through lack of that very bread of life which you have been ordained to distribute. Priests of the living God, can you throw your vows to the wind, and make no effort at rescuing those whose blood will be required at your hands? It is not possible that a clearer case should be made out than that of the necessity for another church in this parish. Eminently favoured as the parish is in being the scene of most active and zealous ministration, its church accommodation is, nevertheless, far below the demand. With a population of more than eight thousand, it has church-room for only fifteen hundred; so that there are thousands who have no access to the house of God, and who can scarcely, therefore, in the least degree, be brought under pastoral superintendence. And of this multitude, there is the strongest ground for believing, that a very large proportion would be ready at once, if opportunity were offered, to attend the ordinances of religion. At all events, we can be quite certain, that if a church were built in the midst of them, and an active servant of God placed as its minister, there would be a speedy thronging up to the sanctuary of the now half-heathen population, and a rapid regeneration would pervade many wild and destitute families. We speak of this as *certain*, because the experiment has often been made, and never made but with success. Our land has become covered with masses of profligate men, just because, unhappily, our system of parochial ministration kept not pace with the augmenting population: there were no means of grace provided for the teeming crowds; and what marvel if they sunk deep in ignorance and vice? But in the very proportion that parochial ministrations have been made

commensurate with the moral wants of a district, has that district risen in virtue and respectability. So that we can confidently say of many of our metropolitan parishes, that they have become the homes of order, of industry, and of loyalty, in the exact degree that they have been more brought under ministerial care; as though the churches which have been built have hallowed their labours, and been the ministers of civilization by being the rallying points of Christianity.

And what we now earnestly entreat of you is, that you will contribute liberally and cheerfully towards making this always successful experiment, in the parish of St. Bride. There is nothing needed but your liberality: the land will be granted, the Church Commissioners will meet a large part of the expenditure, but only on condition that you come forward with sufficient subscriptions to ensure the completion of the work. I know not what more to say to you. I speak to you as members of the Established Church—that church which is said to be *in danger*, though I believe it not; for threatening has but strengthened the devotedness of her sons. Never was that church more efficient, never more laborious; and I have no fears for what I know to be apostolical in *constitution*, when I can see (thanks to God!) that it is increasingly apostolical in *practice*. I call on you, as members of this church, to throw up around her another rampart. Every temple that is built is like a new wall. Give us temples enough in which to minister, and we ask no other bulwark against infidelity, or popery, or dissent.

Thus, by such an appeal as the present, we bring to a touchstone your professed attachment to the Established Church. We cannot be satisfied with such a demonstration as may be given at “Conservative Meetings,” where resolutions are passed breathing the warmest zeal on behalf of the church. There is a vast deal of support now tendered to the church, the motives of which are purely political, and not at all religious. Men who can scarcely be said to have at heart the interests of Christianity, are shrewd enough to perceive that if in any hour of infatuation, or of dark and desperate policy, the legislature of this country should renounce its connexion with the Established Church, there would be in consequence such an undermining of the foundation of good order and genuine civil liberty, that it would be doubtful whether the dislocated system would ever again settle into strength and security. Therefore are many pressing forward in defence of the church, whose anxiety to sustain her is not the anxiety produced by the consciousness that the church

is God's great instrument for reclaiming the moral wilderness, and that to increase her efficiency is to save many souls from death. This is the consciousness with which we trust you are fraught; for we speak to you as the priests, sworn, as it were, on the altar of Christianity. Baptized with its waters, and bearing its banners, come forth to the help of the Lord against the mighty. The summons is not mine. I do but echo to you the cry of thousands suffering the consequences of long and cruel neglect, and who now wait the advance of the priesthood of the Lord, to bring them the blessings of the Gospel of Christ. They shall not wait in vain; I feel that I speak to those whose souls are stirred by the summons, and who are already resolved that, to the full of their ability, they will contribute to the erection of the church. Already I see that church arising; I hear many of those who are now the profligate and the ignorant, blessing God that he ever put it into the hearts of his priests to provide them a sanctuary and a teacher. I hear the old and the young—the healthful in their occupations, the dying in their struggles—invoking a rich recompense on the liberal men who compassionated their destitution and resolved that it should end. Is there—O there cannot be—the individual amongst you, who will refuse to take part in a work for which the call is so urgent, and of which the reward is so great? All will give liberally and cheerfully, not as though it were an ordinary charity sermon for a school or a dispensary, but proportionably to the magnitude of the undertaking. Remember as you give that you are giving to provide means of Christian instruction for hundreds now living, and for thousands yet unborn; and then give in scant measure if you can.

And finally, we again address you as “a royal priesthood,” trusting that there are many of you who feel that they have undertaken the priestly office, and will endeavour to honour God by its due discharge. Persevere, beloved brethren, in your holy ministrations; continue to offer up yourselves a living sacrifice, to preach to the world with the beautiful eloquence of a righteous life, and to waft towards heaven the fragrant incense of your prayer and your praise. You shall soon enter within the veil; and there, in the presence of the great Minister of the sanctuary, discharge a loftier priesthood, and walk a nobler temple. You shall be kings and priests for ever and ever: *kings*, seeing that those who suffer with Christ here, are to reign with him hereafter; *priests*, inasmuch as you shall not rest day nor night, presenting the oblations of your thankfulness, and proclaiming the worthiness of the Lamb to all orders of intelligences.

And be ye sure that it shall add mightily to the blessedness of heaven, that there are many around you who learned the way to glory in the church which you assisted to build ; many who would have sunk into the lake of fire, had they not been snatched as brands from the burning, through the instrumentality which you provided and sustained.

I can add no more. I pray God to bless what has been spoken in weakness, to the honour of his own great name.

THE RENUNCIATION OF EVIL HABITS CONTEMPORANEOUS WITH THE
APPLICATION FOR MERCY.

HON. AND REV. B. W. NOEL, A.M.

ST. JOHN'S CHAPEL, BEDFORD ROW, OCTOBER 23, 1836.

“Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”—ISAIAH, i. 16—18.

OF the nation to whom these words were immediately addressed, the Lord said by his prophet, in the commencement of this prophecy, “I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.” It was the aggravation of all their sin that they had rebelled against tender mercy and bounty, still rejecting all the goodness of God, and his invitations to them. They had perversely sought, in the independence of their own hearts, a happiness which could not last, and which was as corrupt as it was transient. God had punished them for their wilful transgressions, and their punishment had only proved yet more the obduracy of their minds. Filled with trouble and diminished in the kingdom, their comforts destroyed, and themselves exposed to their enemies, it was said of them, “Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.”

These judgments, though they had not led them in their hearts to God, had induced them, at the time when the prophet wrote, to multiply their religious observances, fearful of still further chastenings; and in the hope of averting them, led them to a form of repentance when there was no reality. In the multiplication of these religious observances they sought the pardon of their sins; and it was in this state of mind—seeking pardon and salvation at the hands of God, multiplying their religious observances with that view, and making many prayers—that they received the admonition in our text: “Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well, seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead

for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Here was, notwithstanding their many sins, the declaration that God was ready to forgive; here was the promise of mercy and of salvation when they sought him in his own way: but, as preliminary to pardon, as contemporaneous with every application for pardon which should be at all successful, the Lord bade them renounce every evil habit. The application in their case was *particular*, the injunction itself is *general*. It describes the *way* in which every sinner must return to God, no less than the command that they *were* to return. It assures us that the Lord is ready to forgive, really and truly, through the Son of his love: but those who will seek that forgiveness through the cross must, as contemporaneous with every successful application, renounce every evil habit in the sight of God. "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well."

This one point last mentioned will be enough for our consideration upon the present occasion. Let us observe that the Lord is here intimating to every sinner who would receive his mercy and his blessing in Christ, that he must, in application for that mercy, renounce with all his heart every evil habit. The passage distinctly assures every one who would be a servant of God and an heir of heaven, that it is impossible he should be either, while resolved that he will not renounce his evil ways. He who is resolved to cherish his evil habits, whatever they may be, whether more or less condemned by the world, whether approved and applauded even among men; he who is not resolved to make the declared, revealed Word of God his rule, and to renounce every evil, is not, never can be, a servant and a child of God.

Not unfrequently, when God, in his own overruling providence, has chastened man for his sin, he is brought to such a dread of the divine displeasure, such a fear of still further chastening, that he will renounce *some* iniquities: but what the Lord calls for is, the *unreserved* surrender of them *all*; and *that* he is unwilling to make. Further chastenings extort from him yet larger concessions: but the Lord asks for the unreserved surrender of every evil habit; and *that* the sinner will not make. He will multiply religious observances; he will make many prayers; he will consent to extensive reform of his outward conduct; but the Lord asks him to surrender

every evil habit, and the stout-hearted transgressor refuses to make the surrender. Herod heard John the Baptist preach gladly, and did many things, but he would not renounce Herodias. When Pharaoh was writhing under the divine chastening, and fearing yet greater punishment, he made one concession after another to the divine will, but the *whole* of that divine will he would not accomplish: and when at last there was extorted from his own and his subjects' fears, a full acquiescence in the divine commands, his rebellious heart immediately afterwards withdrew the extorted consent; and he would pursue with his hosts the people whom, at the divine command, he had permitted to escape his hand; and so he perished in his wickedness. And so the Jews, in the case before us, following precisely the same steps with those of the people from whose iron hands they had been delivered, were willing, when God chastened them for their offences, to do many things: but still when they multiplied their prayers, there was this answer given: "When you spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood." They could not renounce the oppression, and the injustice, and the gain which had become sweet to them; and though they were ready to consent to do many things in obedience to divine commands, *this* they could not do.

And while a sinner is found in this state of mind, compelled to relinquish much that is evil, but still unwilling to relinquish all, resolved in some things to transgress, though he dare not in many things in which he formerly indulged; so long he cannot be accepted by the majesty of heaven; and certain it is he never will. Yet when the jailer at Philippi asked what he a sinner must do to be saved, the answer was, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Was there any direction here for washing and making clean, and for putting away the evil of his doings, as preliminary to acceptance with Christ? When the multitudes that surrounded our Saviour asked him what they should do that they might do the works of God, he answered, "This is the work of God, that ye believe in him whom he hath sent." Was there any direction to wash them, to make them clean, as preliminary to that? Assuredly there is none: assuredly the sinner who believes on the Saviour shall, in that very act, be welcomed, blessed, and saved; assuredly he who amidst this assembly shall to-day with his whole heart welcome the Son of God, shall be pardoned, accepted, and saved. But what is it he is called on to believe? In whom is he

bidden to trust? Jesus came as a Saviour from hell; but not alone from hell, but from sin: he came to rule over a willing heart, and to restore the disobedient sinner to allegiance and fidelity. For this he died: for this the Spirit works in the heart of the sinner: for this was the whole machinery of the Gospel (if I may so speak) contrived. It is the very end of redemption: and in believing in Christ he must believe all this; and can he then resolve not to renounce sin? O no; there is an obvious contradiction. Could Pharaoh, in the state of mind which led him to pursue the Israelites against the command of God, have sought pardon and salvation through the Son of God? You see it was impossible: there was an unconquered disobedience of will, which was incompatible with belief in the Saviour; he was trampling at the very moment on the authority which Jesus came to establish; there was in him that rejection of the law of God which Jesus came to dethrone from the human heart; he was pursuing a course incompatible with the reception of the Saviour: and could such a man ask for pardon and salvation in the Son of God? He would be a hypocrite in the very act. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," is addressed to every sinner: but he who resolves to continue in sin is resolved not to welcome the Saviour, and so must perish. Therefore compliance with the language of the text must be contemporaneous with every act of application for mercy through Christ: there must be an explicit renunciation of every evil habit, or the sinner will be rejected; for he is at that very moment trampling on the blood of the covenant, and treating with contempt the very end for which the Saviour of men came into the world.

If therefore any one asks for pardon and salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ, still resolved not to forego the evil habits in which he has indulged, can he hope to be accepted of God; accepted for that which is hypocritical; accepted while he pretends to seek a pardon for which he cares so little that he will not for it renounce some favourite habit? Will he be blessed with a salvation which cost the death of the Son of God incarnate, while he cares so little for that salvation, that he would rather lose it than forego some darling sin? He condemns himself in the very application: he asks for mercy in terms which are insulting to Jehovah; he would be saved in a way which treats with ineffable scorn the whole work of redemption; he is resolved to defeat the ends of redeeming love, and yet obtain the mercy which redeeming love came to communicate. Shall he be accepted? No; there is a message to him from

the Gospel, that should convince him that salvation is impossible until he complies with its requisitions: "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes: cease to do evil; learn to do well." Till that resolution, implied in the scriptural language of the absolution pronounced in our service every sabbath, be adopted—"He pardoneth and absolveth all them that *truly repent, and unfeignedly believe;*" the sinner is only treating with contempt, levity, and indifference, the great work of salvation; and, alas! instead of being accepted and blessed, there is but one answer will meet every petition: "When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood." It might be oppression and injustice—which is a cherished sin with hundreds; but if it be not that in which a man indulges, if, instead of it being said to him, "Your hands are full of *blood*," it was said, "Your hands are full of *sin*," is his condition changed? What if it were injustice or dishonesty in any of its multiplied forms, would not this declaration meet him still—"When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when you make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of *dishonesty*?" Or if it be not dishonesty which is cherished, if it be *intemperance* in any of its forms; if the sinner seeking to be saved will not renounce his intemperance; is he not equally rebellious against the declared will of God, equally trampling under foot the blood of the Son of God; and must not the language be addressed to him, "When you make many prayers I will not hear?"

Or suppose he be not chargeable with these more obvious breaches of the divine law, yet if, while he seeks to be happy in Christ, he is cherishing the society of those who, as he finds from daily experience, prevent him from prosecuting with earnestness the work of his salvation, draw his thoughts from God, and fill him with indifference to salvation; if he allows frivolous amusements to take precedence of religious exercises, preventing dedication and prayer, thereby wasting the means which he has at his disposal, destroying his health, and occupying his mind; and all this because he asks himself, What harm is there? Still defeating the very end of all the means of grace, he must expect, when he holds forth his hands, the Almighty will "hide his eyes"—that when he makes many prayers the Almighty "will not hear;" his hands are full of sin. Or if it be only this—that, while he has a general conviction of the evil of his doings and the misery of his state, and that he can be saved through

Christ only, still there is an unconquered carelessness and alienation from a spiritual state, a neglect of the word of God and of prayer heedlessness of the counsel and example of the best of his fellow-men, and a disregard of many of the means of grace, is he, in that criminal disobedience to the divine will, to expect that he should be met and drawn by the Saviour, and made an heir of glory? Never: such prayers as his must pre-eminently meet a refusal; he has not yet taken the first step that may bring him to eternal blessedness. And if there are any in this assembly who know that hitherto they have not had their hope founded on the Rock of ages, and that as yet they have never come to God in sincerity through Christ; let me ask, Do you not perceive that all the evil habits to which I have alluded, and every other of which your conscience is convinced, must be unreservedly forsaken? If you would give the evidence which it is in your power to give, of the sincerity of your desire to be saved through Christ; if you are convinced that the hypocrite cannot be welcomed by the Searcher of hearts; if you know that he who is resolved to be rebellious cannot be blessed with the salvation which implies the renunciation of rebellious acts; if you do not hope to receive from God a mode of salvation which shall disappoint the very end of that costly work for which the Redeemer came into the world; then "wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings before the eyes of the Lord; seek to do evil; learn to do well."

There is another point in the text which demands our attention; and that is, that if it is needful to renounce evil habits at all, it is well to renounce them *directly*. Let each man, woman, and child, in this assembly, who feels or fears that he is not yet saved in Christ Jesus, take it as the Lord's command to-day, to be *done to-day*.

Sometimes when the half-conquered mind is disposed to seek salvation through Christ, there is this impediment in his way: "I know not whether I am one of God's elect people, and therefore my efforts may be in vain: I know not that I shall obtain divine grace, and without it my efforts must be in vain: I will do nothing." Depressed, therefore, disheartened, discouraged, and seeking to relieve the oppression of the spirit in some other way (a way, the end of which is death) these vain reasons for delay are permitted to triumph over every appeal that is made to the understanding, the conscience, and the heart, and the sinner seems contentedly to embrace destruction because there are *apparent* difficulties in his way. But let such remember that, for the most part, these reasons for delay are, in reality, the reasons of a slothful, indifferent, and but half-convinced

mind: they are at the best but pretexts for delay. But if there should be one in any measure involved in these difficulties, let me beg him to remember, that just as a sinner's *salvation* is purposed by God, so *every common operation of our lives* has been foreseen and purposed too. The omniscience of God is entire, the purposes of God are universal; every thing is under the unsearchable and awful control of his mind; and all the details of our ordinary lives are as much liable to every sort of perplexity as the grand work of working out our own salvation: God is as truly the author, disposer, and controller of all events as he is of this. Therefore, my brethren, if you are not diverted from pursuing the engagements of life; if you are not checked at every step in the operations of your lives by prying into the divine purposes concerning them; be consistent with yourselves, and no more be diverted or discouraged from this. The divine purpose does not hinder you in the ordinary pursuits of the ends of life; the divine purpose will not, be assured, in this: if God has purposed the salvation of a man, he has equally purposed all the steps he must take for that salvation: and if you are not found washing you, making you clean, and putting away the evil of your doings before the eyes of God, you are taking the most effectual means of proving that *you* at least are not the object of his forgiving love, of his electing grace; you are doing that which renders it impossible that you should be saved, because any one who is saved must be saved in this way and no other. Besides, you remember this, that while this way of seeking salvation is essential to each, so he that takes it offers the best proof that he is one of the children of God, that he is under those drawings of the Holy Spirit which would bring him to everlasting happiness: and so, on this account, the more he considers the divine sovereignty and power in the work, the more he thinks of his own absolute helplessness, the more ought he to be urged to delay no longer; to persevere in humble and earnest entreaty, that that great work may be accomplished in him to which he thinks he is alone unequal.

So it is still more futile for a man to stay the progress of this blessed work, because he is not sure that he should receive the converting grace of God. My dear hearers, you are sure of this, that as long as you refuse to renounce evil habits, you cannot receive God's converting grace: you are sure of this, that if the grace of God is ever poured into your hearts, the very first effect must be, to renounce all evil. Seek, then, to renounce the act of evil *now*; seek **not** to dishonour the work of God by leaving that which you *can* do

undone because you cannot do *all*. Forego the *habit* of evil, if still the propensity is unconquered. Show that thus far you honour the divine authority, that you respect the divine law, that you wish for the divine favour, that you will not set yourselves to those ways which you know are forbidden by God, and which must, as far as they are cherished, set you as far from God as hell is far from heaven.

But perhaps these are not the obstacles in your way. Not unfrequently the sinner, half-convinced but yet leaning to the world, will say, "There is enough of reason in this appeal to make me ask which of the numerous professors of religion are right. There are many sects in the Christian church, and each sect has its important subdivisions; and there are vast differences in doctrine as well as discipline among them. There is quite enough in these people to make me inquire which of them is right, and amongst whom truth is to be found." The inference is altogether false: the appeal I make to you is not with a view to induce you to inquire which sect of the church of Christ is right; it is not to make you ask whether in other respects the doctrines which I preach are scriptural or not. Of this you may doubt: I may be wrong in many, and it may be important, points: but this of which I speak as preliminary is *certain*; all parts of the church agree in this, that you must "wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before the eyes of the Lord; cease to do evil; learn to do well." Is it your business, then, to look into disputed doctrines, to determine whether *this* is true, or *that* is false? O my friends, there is something to be done entirely preliminary. You know that you should renounce every evil habit; you know that you should be brought into conformity with the will of God: do not, on vain pretences, delay that necessary work; and then probably all your other doubts will vanish in that consciousness. If you would give your heart to the service of God, forego at once the evil habit that you have loved: trace it back in your past history; find it out, and sacrifice it before the Lord; give up that thing which is evil, whatever it may be; seeking no more the resolving of any doubts or difficulties which may occur to your mind, but surrendering to God what you know ought to be surrendered: and for the most part, when the truth is embraced in love—unquestionable truth; the truth of man's ruin, and his salvation through Christ; the truth in which all Christians, really so, are one; the truth which can take the sinner to heaven; then all other doubts and difficulties about which there is so much

perplexity melt away, and the man wonders where they are. From that master-truth the other blessed truths of religion flow in beautiful harmony, and in such suitability to the sinner's wants, that, when the soul is renewed and is panting after holiness and heaven, he wonders where all the doubts and difficulties that once beset him are gone. Or if there are still doubts about many things of which he hears, they occupy their proper place ; they are most subordinate, and sink, if not into absolute insignificance, into most secondary importance ; they disturb not his faith, they interfere not with his practice ; they destroy not his peace ; he is still walking with God : and if he have not light enough on this side the grave to come to a certain conclusion on these disputed topics, he is quite content to leave the solution to a world where all will be wisdom as well as peace.

Again, then, I beseech you to fasten this on your minds, that you are called to-day to a duty which is preliminary, to that which admits of no doubt, to that on which all are agreed, to that which you must do at once if you would ever be happy in Christ Jesus. In conclusion, then, I would apply this to each individual conscience : I beseech every one in this church to-day, who has any reason to apprehend that he is not in Christ Jesus safe for eternity—through the grace of God's Spirit, through the merit and mediation of the Redeemer, through the love and unchanging favour of God—that he would now listen to this exhortation from the divine word made to him. Let him now explicitly, in the presence of God, renounce all known evil habits ; let him forego them *now* ; *now*, let the Searcher of hearts see that the sacrifice is made ; *now*, though it be like the Isaac of his heart, while the place of sacrifice seems yet distant, may the Lord see that he has belief enough in his word, and desire enough in his Saviour, to make that sacrifice, and go steadfastly forward to make every renunciation in the week that follows, in all his actions and his habits, as well as his purpose now, in conformity with the demand of Almighty God. Seek God's salvation ; seek it thus : you cannot hope, if you shrink from it, if you will not renounce evil, that the Lord will make you his servant ; and it may be, alas ! that, after some years of a very useless profession, or after some years of very painful conflict, you shall find yourselves just what you now are—unsanctified, unpardoned, unsaved ; with this difference, that all your moral energies have been yet more wasted, that you have yet less power to renounce sin than you have now, and salvation placed at a far greater distance. God grant it

may not be so ! May you, my dear children who hear me, know that this is *the first step* to religion, to renounce every evil habit before God ; and then, I had almost said, the work is certain. Helpless, nopeless sinner, cast yourself on the power that is infinitely beyond your wants, and which says to each returning transgressor, “ Come now, and let us reason together : though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS.

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"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."—MATTHEW, vi. 33.

IF there is one great burden which is more frequently than another found assailing the people of God, under which they are ready to sink, and which seems enough to crush them, it is, being careful and troubled about many things; carrying burdens which their divine Master never intended they should bear; and then, instead of their peace flowing as a river, and their righteousness as the waves of the sea, the opposite to all this would be a more correct description of their state and character.

But our blessed Master came, not merely to shew us the way of salvation through his blood, but to teach his people how, through his grace, to live, as well as how through the same grace to die. My text is a very important one; it contains the words of the Son of God. May he be pleased to assist us by the Holy Spirit, that we may understand and feel them. Let us notice, first, the command and the promise of Christ; secondly, the test and the confidence of the church: it seeks first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and it shall want no manner of thing that is good; He who bought it with his blood will supply all its wants, according to the riches of his fulness in glory by Christ Jesus our Lord.

First, THE COMMAND AND THE PROMISE OF CHRIST. The *command* is to "seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness." The term "the kingdom of God," implies authority in Him who rules, subjection in those who obey, and the protection of all the subjects of his mediatorial kingdom; and not only protection, but privilege; all the blessings that the Son of God purchased with his own blood, when he hung on the cross; all those blessings which, as the great Intercessor of the church before the throne of Deity, he asks for us. Now this we are to seek.

But why does man need to seek the *righteousness* of God, if he is the innocent creature which most persons think he is ; if it be true that he comes into the world in perfect innocence ; if it be true that his heart in its natural state is perfectly pure ? Some people tell us that it is the force of bad example ; that as to there being any thing like innate depravity, it is a libel upon humanity ; and that if it were not the force of bad example, men would be perfectly pure and holy. But what leads to the bad example, to the evil heart ? What but a corrupt principle within ? What has caused all the sin and misery that are to be found in the world ? Our Lord gives us the answer : “ Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries,” and all that long black catalogue which no mere man would ever have given : but our Lord needed not that any should testify to him of man, for he knew what was in man.

If, then, we are to seek the righteousness of God, it is because there is no other righteousness : we must have this or none. It is a two-fold righteousness—*imputed* and *imparted*. It is a righteousness *imputed* through the infinite merit of the atoning sacrifice of Christ, whereby we appear before God clothed in the immaculate robe of the Saviour’s spotless righteousness. But it is not only unto all, but upon all, them that believe ; it is not merely something which is imputed, but something what is *imparted*. We are not permitted to behold God, and to see his excellences, and then told that we are under a curse ; that we must worship infinite purity, and ourselves continue impure ; that we are to admire the perfections of God, and yet remain at a distance from him. No ; Christianity comes down to man in all his misery, and helplessness, and insufficiency, and by offering to him the righteousness of God which is by faith in Christ Jesus. “ If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous ; and he is the propitiation for our sins.”

Now, it is said, we are to “ seek ” this : here is the *command*. God takes care that it shall seek us. What mean the services of the Sabbath ? What mean the ordinances of religion, the solemnities of public worship, the declarations of God’s holy book ? What means all the calls of providence, all the movements of the Holy Spirit upon the heart of man ? It is God seeking man. But if man is to be saved he must seek God : “ Seek the kingdom of God, and his righteousness : ” not merely seek to promote religion, but seek *personally* to enjoy its experience, and to know something of its personal comforts, a well of water springing up within you unto everlasting life.

And *how* are you to seek this? Amid the busy haunt of commerce, of business, and merchandize? No; you are to go to God's nouse, to mingle with his people; you are to go to your closet, to your knees; where no eye is upon you; where you can tell to the God who made you by his power, to the Christ who bought you with his blood, and to the Holy Ghost who comforteth and sanctifieth all the elect people of God—where you can tell to the adorable Trinity all you feel and all you wish. It is said, “the kingdom of God is within you.” What are sinful thoughts but so many rebels which must be taken into custody, and kept in prison? “Yet,” says one of our Christian poets,

“ Yet can you of the terms complain?
Where Jesus comes, he comes to reign:
To reign, and with no partial sway;
And even thoughts must die that disobey.”

When we want to learn a language we get a tutor; when we want to attain a science we get an instructor: when we want to go to heaven we must have a guide. Man is fool enough to think he can be his own guide: he thinks, “I have only to read a few chapters, say a few prayers, and turn over a new leaf before I die, and all will be well, or at all events I shall do as well as others.” Yes, you will do as well as others: but how do they do? O the thousands that perish every year through neglect of the holy Gospel! O the thousands who imagine they can be their own guides, and neglect the teaching and grace of the Holy Ghost, and perish in their sins!

But we have left out a little monosyllable in the command, which is of mighty weight here. “Seek ye the kingdom of God, and his righteousness”—when? When you have sought every thing else? When you have found the world a waste and a wilderness? When you have tried created good and been disappointed? When you are about to die, and the world appears to be hung in mourning and in sorrow? No; “Seek ye the kingdom of God, and his righteousness,” and seek them *first*. Why first? Because they *deserve* it: because if you don't seek them *first*, the danger is, you will not seek them *at all*: because they are worth the seeking; they are grand, they are great, they are glorious and divine. All heaven has been in labour for man: and shall man throw away the mighty energies of his mind upon the baubles of this poor world? I have often quoted those lines of Young, and may quote them again, perhaps:

"A soul immortal, spending all her fires,
 Wasting her strength in strenuous idleness,
 Thrown into tumult, rap'tur'd or alarm'd
 At aught this scene can threaten or indulge,
 Resembles ocean into tempest wrought,
 To waft a feather or to drown a fly."

O how contemptible are all the pursuits of earth when put in competition with the pursuit of an infinite God? How soon does life pass away! How soon do all our enjoyments cease! But *here* is something which is of infinite value, because of eternal duration. There is another reason; because no man ever obeyed this command and repented it: one more; because no man ever disobeyed it and did not repent. Here then is the *command*.

Now for *the promise*. My Master is a noble Master; my Lord and Saviour is a noble Lord and Saviour; and he never gives a command without accompanying it with a promise. "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness;" and what then? "All these things will be added unto you:" food, raiment, home, all you want in your passage from this world to another. Godliness hath the promise of this life; not of riches, but of a sufficiency of food and raiment—the bread given, and the water made sure. Look at the prophet in the wilderness, more likely to be robbed than fed by the ravens, who live on prey: but when the Lord's people have need, his goodness can find out the way. O ye careful, sorrowful, burdened ones, look at the text, and be ashamed of your unbelief: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things *shall* be added unto you." Our Lord speaks like one who knows that he *can* do it. Always read the words under the blessed feeling that he has done it for thousands, and is doing it for us.

But it is not said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness;" and then, as your reward, as the blessing, he will give you this world's goods. No; our Lord takes care, when he speaks of temporal good, to put it in its proper place; and, therefore, the expression deserves to be noticed. "All these things shall be *added*," shall be given into the bargain, shall be added (if necessary) to make up what shall be given over and above: the *great* treasure is a *heavenly* one; but in addition to that, there will be thrown into the scale just what you want, in your passage from this world to another, of *temporal* good. What a noble promise! But there is something more noble; and that is, the *fulfilment* of it. How many a Christian heart, if the decencies of public worship

would permit it, would rise up from this congregation, and testify one after another, "How surely my blessed Master has kept that promise true!" And another would say the same, and another, and another. I once gave that promise to a suffering widow: I had done what little I could for her, though it was very little; but I gave her my Master's promise, and told her to present it to her Lord in prayer. I remember meeting her two years afterwards; and upon inquiring how matters stood—"O, sir," said she, "that promise has been well paid to me from the day you gave it to me till now." O try the promise: the more you press upon it, the more you fulfil the command; and sooner shall heaven and earth pass away than the promise shall fail. These promises are like mighty arches; and we are told in architecture, that the greater the weight upon a good arch, the stronger that arch will stand. Some of you lay no stress upon the promises, you do not believe them, and, therefore, do not enjoy them.

I propose to notice very briefly THE TEST AND CONFIDENCE OF THE CHURCH. You may try what you are by this test; you may know the true church from the false; you may know the real Christian from the mere pretender by it: Do you habitually seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness? Is it your feelings, when the day begins, "I have matters of high importance to transact with the King eternal, immortal, invisible?" Do you endeavour to use the language of good old Richard Baxter—to "dip your fingers in the oil of God's grace, before you meddle with the bird-lime of the world?" If ye do; if the grand desire of your soul is, that you may be subjects of the kingdom of God, and be clothed in the righteousness of God at the last day; if in your family arrangements you look first to your children's principles before you look to their property; if you endeavour to bring them up in the fear of the Lord, and the comfort of the Holy Ghost; then you give proof that you "seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness." But if there are any here who know such a description would be a false one—who seek for wealth, for honour, for what this world can give, but who never seek after those things which are infinitely important beyond the grave—such persons are living in the habitual neglect of this command and this promise.

Will any object, and say, "Sir, we must live in the world; we are called to buy and sell, and get gain; we are to provide for our children and for old age?" You have, and do it in the fear of the

Lord: but “seek *first* the kingdom of God, and his righteousness;” then all the other will be attended to in the fear of God, and will have his blessing. Seek the *world* first, its riches, and its honours; and then, in your dying moments, when friends and medical attendants tell you you have but few hours to live, “seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness” *last*—and what then? Ten thousand to one you will never find it at all; ten thousand to one that you perish in your sins; ten thousand to one that you lift your eyes to heaven, and ask of God to help you, and God will not help you. He tells you why: “Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh.”

But I spoke of the matter as exhibiting the *confidence* of the true church. O ye of little faith (you ought to have more, but thank God you have got *any*: a *little* faith is infinitely better than having *none*)—O ye of little faith, wherefore do ye doubt? Why cast down? Earthly resources and enjoyments may fail, and the world may in some respects be becoming to you a waste-howling wilderness; many may be your trials, and those that used to share them with you may either be gone or going: but the Saviour never fails; he remains with the church; he continues with his people. Take, then, the promise of the text: “Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you:” all you want in your pilgrimage from earth to heaven shall be mercifully afforded; and in this confidence learn to say even beforehand, “He hath done all things well.”

UNSPIRITUALITY, ITS SIGNS, EVILS, AND REMEDY.

 REV. S. ROBINS, A.M.

CHRIST'S CHAPEL, NORTHWICK TERRACE, REGENT'S PARK, OCT. 30, 1836.

 "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

JOHN, iv. 24.

It was a remarkable instance of the condescension of the Lord Jesus Christ that he should stop in his way to converse with the humblest. Although he had objects of inconceivable importance before him, and although his mind was occupied, and his soul engaged, with things of the loftiest concernment, he was willing to stay and converse with the poor Samaritan woman, who desired to receive instruction from his lips. It is a somewhat remarkable thing, that in this conversation, our Lord declared himself with a clearness and a directness which we do not find that he used upon any other occasion. The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah cometh;" Jesus said unto her, "I that speak unto thee am he." It seems as if the Lord intended to leave on record a most memorable example of the catholic spirit of his Gospel, and to put to shame all those mean distinctions wherewith men would bind round, and fence in, the freeness of heaven's own mercy.

I need not stay long to remind you of the relative position of the Samaritans and the Jews. They hated each other with a hatred as cordial as that wherewith the sects of religionists amongst ourselves do hate each other. And the causes of their animosity are very easily discovered. In the first place, the Samaritans did not receive the Scriptures; they admitted the authority only of the five books of Moses; the canonical scriptures amongst them were contained in the pentateuch. In the next place, they had a temple amongst themselves, rival and antagonist to the temple at Jerusalem: it was built (as probably you remember) by Sanballat on mount Gerizim. Now in this conversation, the woman claimed antiquity for the Samaritans. "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain." It was

a tradition amongst them that Abraham and Jacob had each had an altar upon this very spot: and that these patriarchs, in this very situation, poured out their prayers, and rendered their offerings before the Lord Most High. And yet we find that antiquity and tradition may sometimes be in the wrong: therefore we would learn a lesson from this part also of this very instructive history.

Our Lord, in the course of his communication with the woman, corrected her erroneous opinions upon two special matters. First, there was a *particular* error. The woman said, "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." Our Lord said in reply to her, "Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship; for salvation is of the Jews." He shows her the error into which she had fallen, in supposing that salvation would emanate from any other place than that which the Lord had specially chosen. "Salvation is of the Jews;" because He who was to preach it, and to seal it with his blood, was himself a Jew; and because the means of grace, in all their entireness and extent, were, to this period, circumscribed and limited to the Jewish people.

Our Lord then corrects a more *general* error into which she had fallen: "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him." "The hour cometh;" a new dispensation was on its way; something more full, and more complete: the shadows were departing, and the very substance had arrived. "Yea, now is;" for the new dispensation had already begun; and this pure and holy faith was now being proclaimed by its great Author unto the world.

Now on these two points we would fix our thoughtfulness for a moment. We would be thankful to God that salvation is now not any longer restricted within its ancient limits; that it has gone far beyond that territory which was occupied by the descendants of faithful Abraham; that it has been borne forth by the wings of every wind; so that upon the people who sat in darkness and the shadow of death hath the light shined. And we would remember, moreover (and it is a matter of exceeding moment to us), that there hath been introduced upon the world an evangelical worship; so that the sacredness of place and of outward things hath in great measure departed. The blessing of the Lord is not confined to localities; but it extendeth *wheresoever* his people are gathered,

and wheresoever there is rendered unto him the worship of humble and faithful hearts. "God is a Spirit."

Now this is the great truth unto which human reason seems never to have attained. It is a matter of the plainest and the most distinct revelation; and, moreover, it is a matter of the utmost importance to right worship. All idolatries wheresoever they have appeared, amongst whatever people, and at whatever times, have been the consequences of low, and gross, and material notions of Deity; and, therefore, it is, that God in his own blessed word hath so continually guarded his people against any forms of image worship. You remember that warning, for instance, in the book of Deuteronomy: "Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb, out of the midst of the fire." Hence the injunction of the second commandment, which was not only directed to warn the people against the worship of false gods, but against the worship of the true God under an outward and visible emblem. "God is a Spirit," and he requires that the worship which is rendered to him should be akin and congenial to his own nature.

Now this is a subject which we feel to be of perpetual importance. In the handling of it we would take up these two points of consideration: first, the signs and evils of an unspiritual condition; and, secondly, the remedy of such a condition.

As to the first head, then, of our present discourse: we have to speak to you concerning THE SIGNS AND THE EVILS OF AN UNSPIRITUAL CONDITION. Man, in the completeness of his original formation, consisteth of two separate, yet united, portions—the spiritual and the material. Now as long as he remained in the presence and in the favour of God, as long as he stood fast in his loyalty and obedience, there was preserved the rightness of his constitution: so that the spiritual did continually exercise and maintain lordship and sovereignty over the material part, and the body waited upon the soul, and was its servant, and did its bidding, and went upon its errands, and executed all its commands. Then the constitution of man was, according to the original decision of God; and then there was a harmony and a fitness in all that he did, and in all the tendencies and issues of his being. But the fall produced a most dismal change in these respects, so that the loftier and the better part was brought into subjection and subserviency to the lower and the baser: and if we wanted to express in a very few

words the evil which the original transgression hath wrought upon man's nature, we would say it consisted in this—that it elevated the lower part, and advanced it unto the place of headship; and it brought down that which was heavenly, and ethereal, and immortal, and bound it down to drudge for the low and the carnal portion: so that henceforth there was not presented to the view of the admiring universe, the spectacle of a creature guided in all his decisions, and directed and kept in all his doings, by that which was akin to Deity itself; but the mournful and the lamentable spectacle of all that was great, and noble, and God-like, bound and bent to the earth, and made to labour for very vanity.

Yet though the fall has introduced such sad corruption into man's nature, and such fearful disorder into his complex constitution, yet there remaineth all the nobleness, and all the superiority of his better part; it hath yet its noble endowments; it hath yet such faculties as may well cause the marvel of all intelligent creatures as they think upon them. *Faculties* doth the soul yet possess whereby it can rise to the contemplation of God himself, and can feed, and feast, and delight itself in all the attributes of the Deity. And it hath an endurance, too, so that when all these fair forms of material subsistence have mouldered and decayed, and gone down to the sepulchre of all things, when worlds, and statesmen, and all the nobles of this external creation have perished, when the heavens and the earth have been folded up like a worn-out garment, the soul of every man shall still subsist; and far beyond the wreck of the material, it shall have its undecayed, and unchangeable, and incorruptible being. And the soul of man, bound in, and fettered, and burdened as it is, hath a kindred and a brotherhood with every spirit; so that in the greatness of its relationship, it can rise above the things that we see, and touch, and lay hold upon, and are conversant with—the soul can rise above them all, and can claim kindred, and brotherhood, and relationship with the loftiest archangel before the throne of God.

And think ye, too, of the *destiny* of the spirit of this immortal, incorruptible being, which God hath formed for himself for ever. When all present things are departed, when the place of our present habitation hath sunk into nothing, then all the mighty multitude that have ever peopled this world will live on, either in happiness with God and his saints, or outcasts and in torments for ever and for ever. And then, think you, what inconceivable importance do these considerations stamp upon the soul of man. It must subsist for ever;

it must be in happiness unchangeable, or in misery unspeakable. And yet we do verily believe, that the main evil of the present time, the giant danger wherewith we are all afflicted is, the unspirituality of the condition in which men are living; the forgetfulness of that immortal and incorruptible tenant which is imprisoned now in the tabernacle of the flesh, and whom our desires and our baser appetites are so conspiring together to chain and to keep down and withdraw from its supremacy.

Now this is plain enough in respect of the way of life and the condition of *some* classes: we can understand it perfectly well in respect of the *poor* people. When we see them go into those places of base and brutal drunkenness, and see them come forth, having put away the form and aspect of manhood, and having taken to themselves the likeness, the odious and the disgusting likeness, of the beasts that perish; we can see well enough that there is nothing of spirituality in *such* a condition. But we are little enough inclined to press hardly upon the state and condition of the poor, and to spare the rich: for we think there is just as much of this low and debasing aspect to be found in well-furnished dining-rooms, and well-appointed tables, where men and women do, with infinite thoughtlessness, congregate themselves, and so convert their houses into one great human sty. For whether it wear a coarser, or whether it wear a more refined aspect, just so long as the mortal part hath the dominancy, just so long as the one object is to gratify the sensual part, we are departing from the loftiness for which we were made, and we are descending to something inconceivably below our destiny.

But to pass away from the sensuality of the great or the little vulgar (for they are by a very small limit indeed distinguished from each other) we will charge this unspirituality upon a larger class that promises fairer and better; men who are cultivating intelligence; men who will not suffer the fields of the mind to lie fallow, but send into it the plough of a most severe and pains-taking discipline: yet the soul may be starved all the while, and there may be an utter famine in the house of the heart. And it seemeth as if this were the special danger—and one unto which the young, and the ardent, and the aspiring, and the intellectual, are particularly exposed—that they should consecrate themselves, with whatever stores they have gained and laid up from other men's minds, or whatever they have achieved in the working out of their own minds, that they should consecrate it all to the present. And this seems to be the special danger of the period on which our lot is cast; and herein

seemeth mainly to consist the peril of an unspiritual state. Almost all the efforts, for instance, of men's minds at the present moment, are absorbed in physical science, or that which tends to the enlargement of present comfort, to the aggrandizement of present interests, to the adorning and decorating of life, and bringing its commodities down as low as we can within the different classes. Now we would not say one word against all this; yet we would contend, that, worthy as it may be, deserving of praise, and deserving of imitation and devotion of mind, yet still being of the intellect it is a lower part. Men are not very fond now to expatiate in regions of pure abstraction, and to deal with mental topics, which are away from all these present joys, which are separated from all these earthly interests. Poetry, that which hath to do with the imagination, and with the better and brighter form of things—how hath it become debased, and how is it of the earth, earthy! It seemeth to us as if the harp of David were silent long, and were hung upon the willows by the water-side, and as if poetry had come down from its regions of imagination just to open up to us a little more of the carnal and the worldly. And all this time there is a most lamentable departure from that which was our original destination.

But that which seems the most fatal symptom is this—that men who are living, in one way or another, for the present, having no thought beyond the circle of this world, will assume high ground, and will represent that theirs is the only fit business in which man's intelligence is to be engaged: and so with all smiling self-complacency, they turn human life into one great balance-sheet of profit and loss; and every question is to be carried into the court of human expediency, and argued out upon the score of present gainfulness; and thus the free spirit is bound down to the earth, and its soaring wing is stunted and fastened to earth; and man, formed for higher and better things, doth settle himself down in the present, and try to content himself in the little sphere of his present hopes and enjoyments. But it will not do: men may try to deceive themselves after they have deceived the world; and they may even carry it with a high hand, and they may tell you that all beyond these things which we have described are but a vain delusion, and that all which we tell them of religion and the Gospel and the concerns of the soul are just a matter of priestcraft, and fit for womanhood and the nursery. But yet they cannot *always* impose upon themselves; for there come the days of alarm; the day when the pestilence is abroad, and knocks at one door and another door; the day when their

strength faileth them ; the day when, in the process of declining nature, death, and the grave, and eternity, come into view ; and then they can play the cheat upon themselves no longer. Yes, and there are other times, too, we do verily believe, in the life of the basest of men, even of the most engrossed in this world's cares, when memory will carry him back to the days of his boyhood ; and he remembereth the quiet times of family worship, and the seasons when the white-headed patriarch took his children along with him to the house of the Lord ; and then, albeit the simple-minded village-boy hath been changed into a busy, careful, worldly man, he remembers that there was in former times something far better than all this, something so fair, and so holy, and so engaging to his better part, that he loveth to get away from all the din, and stir, and confusion of the Babel in which he liveth, and bethink him of his better part. And well for him if God doth so cause him to think of higher matters—truth, holiness, and the love of God—as that he shall be detached, ere it be too late, from the carnal and the earthly condition of life into which he hath fallen.

Now before we dispatch this part of the subject, we say one word concerning the unspiritualness which hath crept into *the church*. We use the term in no restrictive sense ; we mean that which hath come upon the great body of the Lord's professing people. These are times, perhaps, when the science of theology is better understood than it ever hath been : these are times when there are put forth the most able defences, and the most correct systems of Christianity : and yet we are not—no, with all our flattery we cannot persuade ourselves, that we are—the most spiritually-minded generation. For religion hath gone out of her secret closets, and out of her chambers of prayer, and hath flaunted it in the world, and hath been found in your religious meetings, in the crowd, and in the stir, and in the excitement of huge assemblies ; but she hath suffered, we deliberately believe, she hath suffered enormous evil thereby : and there hath been an end of the quiet profitable Bible-reading ; there hath been an end of the holy, heaven-ward prayers ; there hath been an end of that calm, and quiet, and peaceful communing with ourselves and with God ; and the devil, in all his subtilty, has gained his ends, and, by an exceeding craftiness, he hath made us to flow on in the stir and the bustle of a busy religion, until the heart and soul of spirituality hath been well-nigh plucked out of our own hearts.

Let me just remind you, as I have again and again tried faithfully

to tell you, that the religion which God loveth is that of the heart. Men may battle, and strive, and contend from year to year, spending their strength, and their thoughtfulness, and their learning about forms of church government and ecclesiastical discipline; and they may learn to hate those who differ from them with the most orthodox enmity; and yet all the while their own hearts may be as hard as the nether mill-stone, and as cold as the grave into which they are going: there may be all the while the outward forms and appliances of worship—all the dignity of the cathedral, or all the affected simplicity of the meeting-house; and, yet, neither in the one nor the other may there be any thing of a pure and holy worship. There is something altogether independent: and this, we believe, doth contain within itself the very history, the very concentration of our present dangers—that in religious matters, as much as in mere worldly matters, we are forgetting that which containeth the very heart and soul of all profit. It is neither on the one hand nor on the other hand, neither in this nor in that form of government, that we should find spiritual-mindedness: it may be absent from the one or the other, and we are to seek it in higher, and better, and holier things: these are only the frame-work: as far as they go we have no manner of question that the one is right and the other is wrong; but we must not, and we dare not, exalt them above their due measure: we remember that an unspiritual state of the human heart may consist entirely with the one and the other. “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth.”

And now let us go forward to the second head of our subject, and speak to you concerning that which is THE REMEDY.

Now the remedy of this unspiritual condition which doth at this time so pervade the various classes of our community, which doth so infect and so endanger our days, is not to be found in any mere exposition of truth: is not to be found in any softness of persuasion, in any force of demonstration or of conclusive argument. For it would be very possible indeed that the preacher, whom God hath gifted for his work, might open the Bible, and therein expound to the people, on the authority of God himself, how that the only value which belongeth to human existence consists in preparation for another world. He might shew how vain and slippery are all the paths of this world's advancement, and the hearts of the people would bear testimony to the truth of it; they would be utterly unable

to deny it, and they would feel that they had been "toiling in the fire," and that nothing but "vanity" had come forth. And then after all this exposition of the truth, and all this pains-taking argument, and this apparently inevitable conclusion, they *do* go back again, and be just as little spiritual, and just as entirely worldly, as ever before.

It would be possible for a minister to speak of heaven, so as to seem as if the hearts of the people must be touched, and their spirits must be moved within them. I do not mean those representations of heaven, poor and mawkish as they are, which derive all their attractiveness from earthly imagery; which draw upon the stores of the imagination, and dress out a future paradise very like indeed to something we have been looking for here. But I mean those scriptural representations which set before us heaven as the place of holiness and love, and the intelligent service of the blessed as the place where God is, and where his people are like him; and this might be so explained to the people, that they could not but be *arrested*; but, perhaps, they would not *understand*, because what was preached to them was spiritually discerned, and "the carnal mind receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." Or perhaps they might please the intellect, and there might be something singularly satisfactory in the representation, and they would rest upon it, and delight, perhaps, to recur to it: but all the while it remained in the *head*, and never came down to the region of the *heart*.

But we will suppose something better than this: we will suppose that they were touched and affected, and that it did not pass away like the morning cloud or the early dew; and that, perhaps, for the first time in their lives, they passed the threshold of the church with no word of light and easy salutation for their acquaintance on the right hand and on the left: and they went home with pensive thoughts, and some newly-awakened and enkindled desires for heaven, and holiness, and happiness. But then, if this were *all*, the next day there would come the world with its biting and absorbing cares; and it would dress out its attractions in such loveliness, and it would speak its delusions in such a syren voice, that the heart which seemed to have been impressed would be rendered back again, and all its former objects, and its affections, and its desires, and its hopes, would be again devoted to the world.

Beloved, there wants something beyond all this to drive us from our unspiritual condition: there requireth the manifestation of God

to the spirit; there requireth the opening up to us of this great text—"God is a Spirit." "No man hath seen God at any time: the only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Therefore, if you would be weaned from a worldly condition, if you would be brought out of the bondage of an unspiritual state, you must seek to know God as he is revealed in the Gospel of his dear Son; you must seek to know Him whom to know is eternal life. Now it was the great object and purpose of redemption, to bring man out of his carnal into a spiritual state; to lift him out of the desperateness of that condition into which he had fallen, and to restore him to communion with God, and to elevate him, and to bless him, just by bringing hope to dwell again in the habitation of his heart. The only way in which this is ever accomplished is by the work of the Holy Spirit, that Spirit which Jesus poureth out upon his chosen ones, that Spirit which taketh of the things of Jesus and sheweth them unto us, that Spirit which bringeth us away from all carnal, and formal, and pharisaical services, and shows us what God is, and what God requires. And so does the Spirit take us, as it were, by the hand, and lead us to the courts where better worship is rendered to the Lord; delivering us from the darkness and the bondage of our original state; opening up to us clear and spiritual views of God, of his providence, of his grace, of the ultimate tendency of all his designs; unveiling to us the glories of heaven—not as a vague thing, not as a matter of mere abstract contemplation—but telling us that all that is is ours, for we are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

In short, the change which thus taketh place, whereby a man passeth from a carnal to a spiritual state, is nothing else but that regeneration whereof Jesus spake, and concerning which men have fallen into such mistakes. It is neither more nor less than that of which the apostle speaks, when he assures us, that "he that is in Christ is a new creature:" and until that hath been commenced, and is carried on in the heart, man remaineth carnal and unspiritual; and all the means, and all the opportunities of grace are wasted; they fall like the dew upon the face of the earth. God, by the operations of his word and the ministration of his Gospel, attended by the influence of that Spirit whereby his church is edified, doth bring his people into the expectation of higher and better things: and when a man hath once had heaven opened to his view—when he hath once had his conversation there, having felt that his citizenship is in the New Jerusalem, and that earth and hell might combine together, but

they could not deprive him of his inheritance ; then there is a character of poorness cast on all the world's attractions, its opinions, its interests, and enjoyments ; they have lost all their power over him, because he hath put on him the character of pilgrim, and he is going straight forward to the place which God hath appointed for him, and he does not linger, and he will not turn to the right nor to the left, lest he peril that which is so precious.

And it is also in respect of the present that this change doth evidence itself. Show me the man whose heart is evil—show me the man who hath so disciplined his spirit in a bad schooling, that he is content to take up with the fragments of pleasure which he hath, and to put up with the crumbs of present enjoyment ; and I will pronounce of that man, that concerning all that is loftiest and greatest in the human mind, it is that which lieth beyond his present attainment, something which he cannot reach till he hath been detached from the earth, and till his conceptions have grown lofty by becoming heavenly.

And now, brethren, we commend this matter to you, especially on these three points. First, *self-examination*. There subsist in the whole world but two families—the family of the carnal, and the family of the spiritual : *you* must belong to the one or the other. You call yourselves by the name of Jesus, and you vindicate a participation in his Gospel, and you, at least, would have on your dying beds, the enjoyment of that which he hath pledged to his people. But the Gospel is spiritual ; the object of Gospel-worship is spiritual ; the heaven, where the Lord's people shall finally be gathered, is a spiritual place. Therefore examine yourselves upon this head : mark to the which you belong, for be assured of this as an eternal and unchanging truth, that there shall be no passing away from the family of the carnal into the condition, and the enjoyment, and the worship of the spiritual, when this present dispensation hath closed upon it.

Use it for *discipline*. Even God's people, those who in truth are joined unto him, and are living a life of faith in the Son of God, are in perpetual danger ; there is peril to them even in the house of the Lord, that they shall be satisfied with external things ; that they shall be content with lip-service and a form of worship ; and that which doth captivate and attract the understanding may be enough for them. Let them bethink them again and again of this—"God is a Spirit."

Lastly, use it for *comfort*. We feel sometimes that our sorest trial is, that we cannot be altogether spiritual, that the soarings of the spirit are hindered, and that we are chained down to the things of time. There cometh a day when all this shall be ended, “God is a Spirit :” it will be the joy of his people to dwell with him ; they shall worship him in spirit and in truth ; and they shall need no more the beggarly elements whereunto now they are so much indebted. They shall need no more a formal observance of external worship. They shall want no more these poor sanctuaries to be built in which they may assemble only at stated times for the service of the Lord ; but every day shall be a sabbath unto them, and all eternity shall be their period of worship. In that heavenly Jerusalem whereunto they are tending there shall be no temple, “for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.”

CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE, DUTY, PRIVILEGE, AND HOPE

REV. T. MORTIMER, B.D.

ST. MARK'S CHURCH, PENTONVILLE, SUNDAY MORNING, NOV 6, 1836.

“ Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father. And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.”—1 JOHN, ii, 24, 25.

HAD there not been a promise made by the Great Head of the church to his faithful but feeble disciples in all ages—“ Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world ”—the preacher might well falter and hesitate in addressing you for the last Sabbath. He feels, however, that his blessed Master, according to his most true promise, having never left him, never will; and though unworthy of that grace and mercy which he has received while ministering amongst you the word of eternal life, he feels still that his Master is with him, his joy, his refuge, and his strength, in the day of his sorrow, and amid the difficulties of his present position.

I have endeavoured, brethren, for my last Sunday morning's text, not to select what I thought would *please* you, but what I thought would *profit* you. There was a text which I quoted to you some very short time ago, and which I had thought of taking, though it was at first deferred for a season: it still expresses the feeling of my heart. But I can dare to quote it, though I don't think I could bear to preach upon it, and I don't think you could bear to hear a sermon upon it. The words you already know: I wish to *introduce* them in the present sermon; I wish them to stand as a record of your love to your unworthy minister, and of his love to you: “ The Lord deal kindly with you as you have dealt with the dead and with me.” But when I came to consider that we were on the present occasion more to look at your edification than at your gratification—that we were more to regard what was profitable than what was pleasant; pleasing as it might be to tell of all the kindness received, and to acknowledge it with gratitude to God, I felt that

something more important demanded our notice on our last Sabbath morning—on the last Sabbath morning that we are to appear together as a minister and his people, as a pastor and his flock.

Let me then beg your attention to these words : “ Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father. And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.” The *Christian doctrine*, the *Christian duty* and *privilege*, and, lastly, the *Christian hope*—these are the three points which my text will naturally suggest.

First, **THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE.** It is *the doctrine of the Father and of the Son*. There are many who think they are Christians, who, to a certain extent, do honour the Father, but who do no honour to the Son. Christianity, while it by no means robs the Eternal Father of his honour, at the same time promulgates the Saviour’s declaration, that it is the pleasure of the Father that all men should do honour to the Son even as they do honour to the Father. Here, then, is the grand peculiarity of the Christian scheme : it not merely leads us unto the Father, but it leads us to the Son. It is a dispensation of which Christ is the head, is the chief subject is the principal person, to whom all eyes are to be directed ; while all honour, and glory, and majesty, and worship, and thanksgiving, and praise, are poured out upon the Father in all ages, at the foot of the mediatorial throne.

Brethren, what is the doctrine of the church—of the church universal ; the doctrine which Paul, and Peter, and James, and John, and all the college of the apostles preached ? It is salvation through the blood of the adorable Immanuel : out of Christ no salvation : approach to the Eternal Father through the merits of the Son, and in no other possible way : every other approach to the Eternal Father on the part of sinful man on earth is daring impiety and blaspheming mockery ; a man has no right to draw nigh to God the Eternal Father but through the merits and mediation of God the Son. Brethren, this is the doctrine of the primitive church ; this is the doctrine of the Protestant Church, this is the doctrine of our own episcopal church : and I trust in God that I look you boldly in the face this day, and say, this is the doctrine which from the first hour that this church was opened until now hath been preached in it. Yes, brethren, these things you have heard from the beginning : I never asked a man to stand in this pulpit who I did not think

would preach to you that doctrine: no; if I had, the Apostle tells you what to do with such a person: "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."

Here, then, is the Christian doctrine: it is the doctrine of the Father, and the doctrine of the Son: and it involves in the union of the two the doctrine of the *Holy Ghost*. Brethren, we have laid stress upon this; you know we have. We have sometimes annoyed some of you, and grieved some of you, because we told you that morality was one thing, and Christianity another; because we told you that morality never saved any man—never did and never could. He who is going down to the grave, who is looking forward to the grave, trusting to this—that he has been very moral, that he has been very amiable, that he has been very kind, that he has sought to do good to others, that he has been a pattern of justice and uprightness, and all that the world calls excellent, and is resting on this for acceptance with his God, when his disembodied soul shall be ushered into the divine presence; that man is holding a lie in his right hand, and a lie which, unless he give it up, will sink his immortal soul lower than the grave. Brethren, the doctrine of the church, the doctrine of the primitive church, the doctrine of the reformed Protestant Church, the doctrine of our own church, is, salvation from the Eternal Father, through the purchase and mediation of the second person in the Trinity, the adorable Redeemer, and brought home to the heart by the power, and work, and office of God the Holy Ghost. Our own church sets this forth to us, when she teaches, even in the days of our infancy—"I believe in God the *Father*, who hath made me and all the world; in God the *Son*, who hath redeemed me and all mankind; and in God the *Holy Ghost*, who sanctifieth me and all the elect people of God."

Will you, then, bear with me if I say, that, as I cannot but be aware, painful as it is to me to say it, yet I cannot but be aware that there are many before me who have stately attended the worship of God in this place, but who, alas! to the present hour have never yet received the doctrine of the Father and of the Son; have never fled to the adorable Redeemer for salvation through his blood. I shall never as your pastor in this place have another opportunity of battling the matter with you. I have often done that; I have often come in the character of a combatant; I have drawn upon you the sword of the Spirit, the word of God: and I have sought in

the strength of Israel's God, to slay this Goliath, this chief error, this delusive, this damnable doctrine, that there was any salvation for man at all through his own merits, through his own works, through his own goodness; while I have set before you that all salvation must come through the merits and mediation of our adorable Lord.

I appeal, then, from you (for I shall soon now have finished my work amongst you: I hope this afternoon, at three o'clock, to administer, with my fellow-labourer in the Gospel, the holy supper of the Lord, and in the evening to preach my last sermon in this pulpit) —I appeal, then, from your censure to the opinion of my great Master and your great Judge at the last great day. I appeal, too, against your present indifference, your present hesitation, your present opposition, to what you yourselves shall think when you turn your pale face to the wall, and when medical attendants whisper to anxious friends, "It will soon all be over:" then some of you will think of your faithful though unworthy minister, who used often to tell you some very plain truths, who used often to bring these matters before you, and did not care a straw to please you, but would almost have laid down his life for you. This, then, is the doctrine of the Father and of the Son, involving in it the work, and glory, and agency, and offices, and grace, of the third Person in the adorable Trinity; to whom, with the Father and the Son be glory everlasting.

But having considered the doctrine of the church, let me, secondly, consider THE DUTY AND PRIVILEGE OF THE CHURCH. You have heard these things repeatedly. What is the *duty*? "Let them abide in you." And what the *privilege*? "If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father." Let it "abide in you:" but it must first obtain admission; it must get into the heart before it can abide there. Ah! and not only so, my brethren; it must get into the heart, and it must take its mighty grasp of the heart; it must take a mighty hold upon the soul. And so it does wherever it comes in truth; wherever the doctrine of the Father and of the Son, preached in its simplicity, and applied by the power of the Holy Ghost, enters the soul, it enters there to have its own way, to turn out the power of sin; first, to resist sin, and then to imprison sin, and ultimately, by the grace of God, to cast it out; and though in this world the Christian is never perfectly like his Lord, until he is delivered from the burden of the flesh, and has entered into God's

perfect joy and felicity : yet the grand object, the grand effort, the grand feeling and spiritual desire of every real Christian, is to be a saint indeed ; to be truly, deeply, increasingly, permanently, devoted to God. It abides in him ; the doctrine of the Father and of the Son abides in him. But it does not abide in him as an uninfluential dogma, as a sentiment unconnected with his feelings or with his practice. No ; wherever the doctrine of the Father and of the Son really enters the soul, it takes hold of the heart, it set up the throne of its Lord, and it commands subjection. Brethren, let this doctrine abide in you ; not merely abide with you. I thank God, I feel assured that it will ; for I am not going to make way for some careless priest, who will care nothing about your souls : no ; my successor, already appointed to exercise this office, is a man of God, who will watch for your souls, as one that must give account. That text touched my heart before I came to church : “ Watch for souls as those that must give account : ” and I could not help remembering last Sunday evening’s text—“ Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward.” We have watched you, thank God, from the beginning, though with many infirmities, though amidst much imperfection. The preacher can say with truth and honesty, he never preached a sermon to you which he thought came up to the grandeur, and glory, and excellence of the subject itself : but the doctrine *has* been with you, and see to it that it abide within you. These grand truths, these solemn, simple truths, involving the whole outline of scriptural truth, the sacred doctrine of revealed religion, the depravity of the human heart, the necessity of an atoning sacrifice, and of the divine Spirit to assist our infirmities, to enlighten our understandings, to soften our hearts ; all this is included in the doctrine of the Father and of the Son : let it abide within you.

And what a blessing it will be, if that which you have heard from the beginning shall remain in you ! You also shall continue in the Son and in the Father : and there you are safe ; and there you are blessed. Your privilege is to feel that your inheritance is in God. Your privilege is to challenge your spiritual enemies, while abiding in the doctrine of the Father and of the Son, and to say in the language of the apostle, “ Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect ? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth ? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ ? shall tribulation, or dis-

tress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword ? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long ; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

But having considered, first, the Christian doctrine, and, secondly, the Christian duty and privilege, we come, lastly, to consider THE CHRISTIAN HOPE. "This is the promise, even eternal life." When I first entered this church after its consecration, it was a solemn moment. I got into it alone ; there was not a soul here, but God and myself. I remember very earnestly praying that God would give a special blessing upon the commencement of my ministry. I remember well this hope that I had ; that some in this parish might have to bless God to all eternity that this church was ever built, ever opened, ever dedicated to God's service. Brethren, between that time and this, many changes have taken place amongst us. I have seen the pews change again and again those who were seated in them : I have seen the same families greatly changed : I have seen the garb of mourning go round from pew to pew, and only last Sunday I saw it in another. But where are some of our friends who used to worship with us here ? They are not with us, but they are with God : "This is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life." They walked up and down in this world of sin as the servants of God, and candidates for immortality ; they went in and out amongst us as Christians ; they received the word of God in its power ; they brought forth the fruits of holiness : but where are they now ? I repeat it, they are in eternal life : and we, I trust, are on the way. How long our pilgrimage may be, or how short, we know not, nor would we care to know : the Lord is still with his people ; the Lord whom we serve is still with his children : "This is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life." We are not content, we could not be content, to live here always. No ; we know there is a better land, a land of peace, of purity, and perfect bliss ; a land where the inhabitants feel no pain ; where none say, "I am sick ;" where the people are delivered from sorrow ; the land where the Lord shines forth in all his glory, where his people behold his face, where his people reflect his light, and where

his people sing of his salvation ; and there is no more death there, neither sorrow, nor sighing ; for the former things have passed away.

Brethren, for God's sake and for your own, think what is implied in *eternal life*. It means something more and something better than this poor world can offer to your notice or for your acceptance. What is the world with all its pomp, with all its joy ?

“ A little sun, a little rain,
And then night sweeps along the plain,
And all things pass away :
Man soon retires, yields up his trust ;
And all his hopes, and all his fears
Lie with him in the dust.”

This is true if he is not a Christian : but it is not true if he is one ; all his hopes then do not lie with him in the dust. No ; his hopes ascend with him into the eternal world, pierce through that veil which separates this world from a better, and press before him into the presence of his God. “ This is the promise which he hath promised us, even eternal life.”

If then, beloved people (I call you so for nearly twelve hours longer), if, my beloved flock, we have sometimes told you of the absolute necessity of receiving the Christian doctrine, and leading the Christian life, and fighting the Christian warfare, it has been for this reason : we believed that there was no other way of enjoying the peace of God ; and I believe there is no other way : there is no other path that leads to everlasting joy. Weigh, then, this matter ; dwell upon the Christian doctrine, upon the Christian duty and privilege : and often again may you be satisfied, in your sojourning through the wilderness, by the Christian hope !

And, now, gladly should I have had nothing to say on any other subject : glad should I have been, on this occasion, to have had not to ask you for any contributions : glad should I have been to bear the whole expense connected with the worship of God in this place, to have said at leaving you, “ There, I will gladly bear the whole, and you shall have nothing to bear.” This I had thought of ; but after weighing it solemnly and seriously, I felt this : “ No, it is not my duty to my motherless children ; it is not what my affectionate flock would wish.” It has been so, beloved, that in carrying on the worship of God in this place, there have been some very considerable expenses ; for which, when our churchwardens stated to me, very properly, that they had no funds in hand, I felt it my duty to say, “ I will be responsible,” believing that my affectionate people

will bear me out in the expense. I shall not enlarge on the nature or the amount of those expenses, except further to say this; that a large sum, somewhere about two hundred and fifty pounds, will be necessary, in order to liquidate certain outstanding expenses for this church. These I was anxious to see discharged before I left. Let it not be supposed for one moment, that this has been owing to any thing excessive on the part of those who have had to do with it. The professional persons engaged in it gave us their services in the most handsome manner; the architect rendering us his help free of any expense; and the builder, one of my dear congregation, generously contributing altogether what would amount, I suppose, to about one hundred guineas, in order to show his love to the church where he worshipped, and to the minister upon whose ministry he attended. I mention this, that we may endeavour to follow his example, and, according to our ability, do what we can. *

But I am not going to press the matter: I never had to press you, and you never shall have to say that I do this day. Give what you can, but give it with a thankful and prayerful spirit; give what you can to assist us in this work of the Lord. One thing I ought to mention, as, perhaps, some may wonder at the amount; but so it was that we were anxious, if you remember, to be all ready for the visit of our respected diocesan, when he came to confirm last year. It was found that what was undertaken would take considerably longer than we had anticipated; and the men had to work night and day to get every thing ready. I felt anxious that nothing should be wanting, that when our chief ecclesiastical officer came to visit us, he should see all in order, and not have to tell us of things that were wanting.

Brethren, my object while I have been with you has not been to enrich myself, but to enrich you. God knows it, and I know it, and I trust you know it too. We can say with truth, "We have not sought yours, but you." We have not sought how we might enrich ourselves, but how we might, through the blessing of God, enrich you unto eternal life. We shall now, after contributing to the cause of our God, return home to our respective habitations; and at three o'clock meet together to commemorate the dying love of our Lord and Master. And we hope, by and bye, amid the services of the upper world, amid the chaunts of angels, and cherubim, and seraphim, to look back upon all the way which the Lord our God hath led us here in the wilderness; and, I trust, we shall have then to say, "He hath done all things well."

THE MINISTER'S PARTING PRAYER.

REV. T. MORTIMER, B.D.

ST. MARK'S CHURCH, PENTONVILLE, NOVEMBER 6, 1836.

“ And Samson called unto the Lord, and said, O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God.”—JUDGES, xvi. 28.

WE are often greatly mistaken in our calculations respecting sermons. That sermon does the most good which God is pleased to crown with the greatest blessing : and therefore, beloved brethren, as in the good providence of God, I am come to my last sermon among you, I am anxious to do this : I am anxious to set the pious praying in reference to those that are not pious. I know that it is little that one poor sinner can do ; but if I can set five hundred or a thousand, who really love and serve God, this night, if I can set them at prayer—fervent, ardent, earnest prayer to God, to crown this, my feeble, but last effort in this place with his blessing, then you may never know the good that will be done till the day of eternity. There is no telling what the God whom we serve may be pleased to do in answer to the prayers of his people. Vain is the help of man ; man's best efforts are useless and inefficient : but when God sends down his Spirit, and crowns the feeblest efforts with his blessing, who can calculate where the good shall end ?

Let me, in directing your attention to this subject, consider, first, some points of similarity, and then some points of dissimilarity : and may the Holy Ghost assist us, and bless us, enabling us to speak and you to hear, to our mutual edification, and to the glory of his name.

I was much struck with the second lesson : it was the proper chapter appointed as the second lesson by the church for this evening's service ; it was not one of my selection : but had it been of my selection, had I felt myself at liberty to have taken any chapter in the Bible, on such an occasion, I know not where I could have found a more suitable one. The Gospel of Jesus is the same in all ages : ministers and their people are united by the same ties : ministers are sent forth by the great Head of the church ; they are

the labourers in word and doctrine, to do their patient work, to finish their allotted labour, and then to render up an account of their stewardship when they are to be no longer stewards.

But I turn to the text. In the first place, here is *the effort of a man under deep affliction*. Samson was now, and had been for some time, in a state of deep affliction : the Philistines had treated him most cruelly ; he felt the loss that he had been called to suffer ; he was placed under circumstances most discouraging, most depressing. But a Christian always knows where to look in the day of trouble ; a servant of God is never left to himself in the day of affliction : banish him where you will, send him into exile, send him even among the enemies of the Lord, send him even from his own dear native land, place him even in Patmos—the Holy Ghost, as he did with St. John, can visit him there ; and there, hearing the words of mercy and truth, he shall be enabled to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

But, secondly, it was *an effort of a man who felt that his time was short, and wished to improve the short time that remained*. He loved the people of Israel ; he longed to strike a blow upon their enemies ; he felt that his time was short : he was a man in deep affliction, but he felt no time was to be lost. O that we were always anxious to improve our opportunities ! Here is an opportunity given me for which I must give an account before the Judge of quick and dead. Here is a mass of human beings passing hastily through this world in their passage to another ; some prepared to meet their God, many totally unprepared, far from Christ, unacquainted with the knowledge of salvation, or the remission of sins ; and if they die as they are, they will be totally undone. O, brethren, behold the state of the case, and offer up your fervent prayers that the effort may not be in vain in the Lord.

But, thirdly, here is *the effort of a very bold and daring faith ; I say of a very bold and daring faith*. There appeared nothing but difficulties : true, he himself was to be sacrificed if the effort succeeded ; but mark, it was by a supernatural agency that he was assisted, I doubt not, in this matter. It was a bold and daring act of faith ; and, in his blindness, while the Philistines were making sport of him, while they had him out in order that they might treat him with ridicule and with contempt, there was a secret intercourse going on between God and his soul. Here are the very words that he used in his approach to Jehovah ; here is the very request that he made of the great and the infinite God. Brethren, I am quite sure, if we

were more daring for God, we should be more successful. We are often pale-faced cowards: we are thrown in the way of worldly men; we have an opportunity of speaking for God; the occasion demands it; the men of the world expect it from us; they know what our principles are, they know what our conduct ought to be; but we are afraid of giving offence. Is a skilful surgeon afraid of giving offence when he tells the patient that such and such means must be instantly adopted or life is in jeopardy, that life is good for nothing, that it will be sacrificed if such and such means are not instantly adopted? And why is he listened to so thankfully? Why is he listened to so thankfully? And why are his means, however distressing and painful, readily submitted to? For this reason; that men know the value of their bodies; but, God knows, they don't know the value of their souls. No; men do not know the value of the never-dying soul—the soul that must exist to all eternity in conscious happiness or in conscious woe! Why then are we not more valiant for truth in the world? Why are we not more bold and daring to take a decided step, whatever may be the consequences to ourselves—a decided step, when called to do it in the way of duty?

Lastly, with regard to the similarity of the case, let us hope that *our* attempt in the name of the Lord may also be crowned with success. If Samson asked for help from God, it was a peculiar juncture; it was a crisis in the history of the man and in the history of the nation. He called upon God to help him; God heard his prayer, and endowed him with supernatural strength: he made the mighty effort, and God gave the mighty blessing.

Such, then, was the case of Samson. He did not go, trusting in himself. It was a day of great trial and of great difficulty, but it was a day of daring faith, of mighty effort in entire dependence upon God. Brethren, what a solemn spectacle do we present, assembled for the last time as a pastor and a flock! Behold, here we are gathered together. We must meet again; but where? At the bar of the final Judge of quick and dead. We must meet together, but for what purpose? To pray and to preach? No; to be judged for the deeds done in the body. The great white throne shall descend; the dead, small and great, shall appear before God; the judgment shall be set, and the books shall be opened; and every soul of man now present, and every soul of man that hath ever lived, shall be there: you and I shall consequently be there. Brethren, are there not some who, if they were to die to-night, would be eternally lost? I would to God I could think that were not so: it would rejoice my

soul to leave a people, all of whom I could hope, in the judgment of charity, were devoted to God. But I pray you remember the words, "Examine yourselves whether ye be of the faith." Do not be content except with satisfactory evidence. Go into the matter thoroughly; try your own hearts; judge your own selves; for, if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged of the Lord.

The effort on the present occasion you know, and I know, is one made under deep affliction. At first I thought that one sermon this day would be as much as I ought to preach; but I considered that time was short, and eternity was long. I began to think, "Who knows but some who have never before listened to the word may listen to it now? Who knows but some that have turned a deaf ear hitherto, may now, in answer to my people's prayers, receive the Holy Spirit, and begin to live a new and a holy life?"

But let me turn to the points of DISSIMILARITY. Samson, led by the Spirit of God to punish the wickedness of the Philistines, was seeking their *destruction*: heaven knows that we are seeking your *salvation*. We do wish indeed to bring you down, but it is in order to raise you up: we do wish to *alarm* you, but it is in order subsequently to *comfort* you: we do wish to shew you your *danger*, but it is in order to lead you to flee for *refuge* to the hope set before you in the Gospel.

Again, Samson came to avenge *injuries* that had been offered unto him: we come to return thanks for many acts of *kindness* shown to us: and yet why do we not spend the greater part of our sermon in acknowledging those things? Because we feel we have something more important to do. Many a soul is at stake now within these sacred walls. I could go up to some persons, if it were proper, if the decencies and proprieties of life permitted it, I could go up to some persons, and I could say to some, "You are the man that I have been seeking to bring down in the sense of sin, and to lead you to call upon God." I could go up to another, and I could say, "I have watched you narrowly; I have seen how you have been going on, and I am forced to report this; that I leave you with a heart as hard as a rock; I leave you with a heart as cold as ice; I leave you as far from God almost as it is possible to be on this side the grave." I could say so to some; and I could say so to some who have been very kind to me; I could say so to some who have been most respectful to me; I could say so to some who have sought to make my cup overflow with comfort: and O what do I want? To see them drinking of the cup of salvation; to see them

tasting of the waters of life ; to see them receiving the consolations of the Holy Spirit. I come then to make the effort : I know that all that man can do is in vain, and therefore I say, "Strengthen me, O strengthen me this once, O God." It is the last effort. Yes, there are many in this church of whom I believe they will never hear my feeble voice any more as long as they live, warning them of their danger, and telling them where to look for help and salvation. Ah, brethren ! if God do not help us, we are met together in vain. I have lived long enough to learn this, that the good that is done on the earth, the Lord doth it himself ; and unless it please Almighty God to send down his Holy Spirit, all our efforts are in vain.

Further, Samson, in offering up the prayer that he did offer, and in making the effort that he did make, spread *death* and *desolation* around him ; *we* wish to spread *life* and *salvation* around us. We believe, that if our people pray for us, our God will bear testimony to the word of his grace. We believe that, inefficient as we are, our God is able to send down such a rich effusion of his Holy Spirit as we have never known before in this place. Come, lift up your hearts. Are there not some parents whose children are here, but they are growing up without religion ? Pray for their conversion now. Is there not one case—more than one, two, three, five, or ten—is there not the individual who is deeply interested about some beloved relative—the husband for the wife, or the wife for the husband—the parent for the child, or the child for the parent—the brother for the sister, or the sister for the brother ? The word of God has been preached ; they have heard sermons delivered ; but, alas ! alas ! there they are as far from God as ever. Can I reach them to-night ? No ; but if you pray God for me I may. If the truly devout, the truly sincere and consistent Christians will lift up their hearts for a special blessing, and for the parting blessing, I believe before God that a parting blessing and a special blessing will be given. O, it may be replied by the man of the world, "Why need you put yourself so much out of the way for us ? Don't be concerned about our souls." No, I would not, if you could be concerned about them yourselves. I could be much more easy, I could be much more peaceful and happy, if I knew that all were under real concern about their everlasting welfare. But how many do I leave just as worldly as ever ! At church to-night—at cards to-morrow ; in the house of God to-night—in the theatre, perhaps, within twenty-four hours. Gay, trifling, thoughtless creatures, passing rapidly through this world in their way to another,

unconvinced, unconverted, and then, by and bye, the stroke of death comes; they feel themselves prisoners under his grasp; they try to shake it off; but there is no shaking it off: and what then? Then the clergy are sent for; then, all in a few hours, the work of conversion is to be hurried through; persons are to be satisfied of their eternal state; they then look for the consolations of religion. Ah! my dear hearers, don't deceive yourselves; if you live a worldly life, you must expect to die a dreadful death; if you turn away your ears from listening to the Gospel now, don't expect consolation from the Gospel in the hour and moment of your deepest horror. "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh;" and you know whose words they are. They are, perhaps, the most dreadful words in the Bible; because they are words of Almighty God, the God of infinite pity and of infinite mercy—making mock of the sinner who had long refused this mercy before, making mock of the sinner in the day of his distress, and refusing to listen to his prayer. Brethren, do not trifle with God; do not trifle with the preached Gospel. Remember, this is a matter for your life: God give you grace that you may listen to it.

But here is my hope: I do anticipate that some who have hitherto been careless and unconcerned, and to whom I have been able to render no spiritual good, may from my successor receive the word of life and truth. Yes, you are not going to be deprived in this place of a faithful ministry. Let me give you this as my parting advice: stand by your minister; hold up his hands, cheer his heart: he will preach the better for it: let him see a united people, and he will come among you with the greater delight. Let him find that you are ever glad to support the varied and various objects of religious charity which he brings before you: I hope I shall never hear that the collections of St Mark's decline: I hope I shall always find this report concerning you, that you keep up your good character, your good character for Christian liberality. But above all, pray for him; above all, I say, pray for him, if you want to get a blessing for your own souls. Pray for your minister: I will engage he will come among you in the spirit of prayer. A truly Christian letter, which I had from him when first the matter was announced to him, told me the spirit and temper of the man of God who is coming to labour in this place. At the same time I doubt not your prayers will follow my dear fellow-labourer in the Gospel who is going to

oe curate at the mother church. I am sure we all must feel under great obligations to him for the faithful and laborious manner in which he has discharged the duties of his ministry while he has been amongst you. It is somewhat distressing to think that we have both been recently called to suffer the same affliction; and our sorrows and our trials have called forth the sympathy of our people in a way that I believe we shall both never forget to the day of eternity. Yes, so hold up your new minister; comfort his heart, sympathize with him in his sorrows, if God visits him with them; and show him that he has a people on whose love and whose liberality he may calculate.

But to turn back to the subject before us: the effort of Samson was a *last* effort. How many Sunday nights, when that clock has stood whereabouts it now stands, approaching the hour of eight—how many Sunday nights for nine years have I looked round upon this congregation, or at least the congregation assembling in this place, and thought thus: What has been done this sabbath-day? What wanderers have been reclaimed? What mourners have been comforted? What saints have been edified in their most holy faith? What has been done? And then, as we have usually concluded at the hour of eight, I have thought thus—Another sabbath is over: and thus—Another sabbath is over. There came first our sabbaths for eighteen hundred and twenty-eight, and then for twenty-nine, and then for thirty, and so on even until now: and how many who used to worship with us have gone to their eternal reward! O that it may please God to grant that some might this night be called effectually by the power of the Spirit to forsake their sins, and to turn to God. How many young people do I leave behind me without any thing like saving religion! You who are to be the parents of another generation, and to rise before long to take the place of fathers and mothers going off the stage of life. O my dear young friends, often have I in this place tried to seize hold of the youthful heart; and, thank God, it has not been told you in vain. I was yesterday looking over a large packet of pastoral letters received from my flock, and I could not help shedding tears of joy and gratitude for the number of young men whose religious history was therein brought before me, who once were darkness, but who now are light in the Lord—who once were afar off, but are brought nigh by the blood of Christ. Samson made his feeble effort; and what was the consequence? Some who came to make sport were the very persons who fell in consequence of his prayer. And who can tell but that some poor scoffer who came within these sacred walls

to-night with the intention, if it were possible, to make some disturbance, but he found the people too devout, he found the people too prayerful, he found the people too attentive to observe it—who can tell but that such an one may be taught the error of his way? O what joy would it be to me to know that some scoffing infidel had, in answer to your prayers this night, been led to seek for mercy; this night led, as he goes out of the church, to say from the bottom of his heart, “God be merciful to me a sinner!”

Well, brethren, I have done; I have finished the work that God in this place has given me to do. I have finished it with many infirmities: I have all along had to cast myself upon your indulgence. I never came to you upon the stilts of professional importance: I always had to tell you that I was a poor helpless sinner, as helpless and as sinful as any of you: but I tried “to hold up a large cross”—(to borrow a term which a dear friend of mine in one of his publications makes use of)—a large cross; not a large crucifix—no, but full salvation through the blood of Jesus, a rich, and a free, and a mighty Gospel.

Well, may we all meet in a blessed eternity! May none of you at the last day have to wish that God had never set me here! I have spoken plain things: I have never sought to *please* you—I have sought to *save* you; and I hope to hear good tidings of your faith and charity; that you are a united people. O don't be a divided people. I don't know any thing more painful than that to a faithful minister. When I found, some few years ago, that there were divisions, and heart-burnings, and jealousies among my flock, I wept over it in secret; and so did that dear sainted woman who was then the companion of my sorrow, and the joy of my heart. And it was then that I determined, if the good providence of God opened me a way, that I would go from a scene of division and party-spirit. Let my successor come to enjoy better things: let him come to find a people rallying around him, praying much for him to God, and holding up his hands: and then I will engage for him, he shall be found to come to you in all the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of peace. Long years be granted to him! Great success rest upon him, and upon all labouring in this district, and upon all faithful ministers of Christ throughout the world; till at length the last sinner is brought to God, the last soul converted from the error of his way, the trumpet sounding, the dead rising, the saints meeting the Lord in the air, and the faithful servants of God going to be for ever with their Lord!

THE NATURE AND DESIGN OF A DIVINE REVELATION.*

REV. J. BLACKBURN,
SILVER STREET CHAPEL, OCTOBER 6, 1836.

"He spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began."
LUKE i. 70.

THAT there exists in the universe by which we are surrounded an intelligent first cause of all things—the immortal, independent, and unchangeable Jehovah, is a proposition which, I suppose, there is scarcely any one in this assembly who will dispute. The more we study the works of that blessed Being in the scenes of nature, the more we shall be impressed with a deep and profound veneration, not only of the power, the sagacity, and the wisdom, but of the goodness of the great Father of all. But whilst we are thus taught by the contemplation of his works, that he is powerful, wise, and benevolent, we learn little of his moral perfections, and nothing of his spiritual. We know not what service he requires at our hand, nor what we must do to secure the favour which he alone can bestow. Our own eternal destinies, also, are alike uncertain and obscure, for we are but of yesterday, and know nothing. It is obvious, indeed, that one generation passes away, and another cometh; but whither they go, and how they shall return again, and what is their final destiny, are all matters of perfect uncertainty on the principles of natural religion; clouds and darkness rest upon them.

We may therefore attend with gratitude to the subject we are this evening called to contemplate—the *nature and design of a divine revelation*. The word "revelation," which is used to express the supernatural communication of truth to the minds of men, properly signifies the throwing back of the veil. This is the very idea that we shall now seek to illustrate, because we believe that Jehovah, by the inspiration of his holy servants, "the prophets who have been since the world began," has unveiled to our view the mysteries of his nature and government, or in other words, has employed men

* First of a Course of Thirteen Lectures, by ministers in connexion with the Christian Instruction Society.

to be the channels of communicating his mind and will to their fellow-men from the apostacy of our race.

It is my intention, to-night, with all possible brevity, to show you that such a revelation is most desirable; that such a revelation is actually possessed; and that such a revelation is truly beneficial.

In the first place, I am anxious to show you that A REVELATION FROM GOD WAS MOST DESIRABLE. It is so on many accounts, but I will only present to you two considerations.

First, *because the uncertainty of human opinions has been realized.* When the notions of men are examined concerning the nature of God, and the principles by which their own conduct is to be governed, it is obvious that they are at once vague, contradictory, and absurd. We find in many barbarous nations that the existence of the Creator is unknown. It has, indeed, been often affirmed, that all men believe that there is a God; but among the African and Indian tribes individuals have been found who appeared to have no conception of a great First Cause at all. The majority of mankind, however, have such a conviction; and how they have obtained it is an interesting question which we need not at the present moment discuss. It is obvious, that where men have the knowledge of the existence of the great Parent of the universe, it must either be by the traditions of their forefathers, handing down the fact which had been known by preceding generations from the primeval age, or else by a process of induction from the works of creation which they contemplate on every hand.

Now it is very certain that individuals may know something about the existence of God, who know nothing about the duty they owe to him and their fellow-men. It is said, that these may be ascertained by the inductions of reason. That is at best a very precarious, and, I think I can show you, is a hopeless process. Men, you say, are to deduce the principles of their duty to God and their fellows from the testimony of nature. But how is this to be done? Men are confessedly diversified in their powers of reasoning: some have a natural acuteness, and others are remarkably obtuse; some have had their intellectual faculties sharpened by discipline and an extended education, and others have had no educational advantages at all. Now, it is said, Let men infer their duty from the works of God. But how is it possible that men who bring to the process such a great diversity of intellectual power can effect this? It is like assigning to a company of men the performance of a certain

mechanical operation ; for which one man may possess some skill, while the others are perfectly ignorant of the art ; one may possess tools, and the rest not have an instrument wherewith to work. It scarcely appears sane, then, to imagine that men, characterized by such extraordinary diversity of intellectual power, can, by the processes of reasoning, obtain a just knowledge of God, and their duty to him and their fellow-men.

Again, such a process requires *leisure*. Now in the state of society on which we are thrown, every man has his daily occupation ; one is going to his farm, and another to his merchandize ; and most individuals find they have not leisure for the ordinary occupations of life, much less for those profound inquiries which might engross their time and attention for years. To say, then, to a labouring mechanic, who has to toil twelve or fourteen hours every day to provide an honest maintenance for himself and his family, You must read, and examine, and reason for yourself, in order to ascertain from the works of creation your duty to God and men, is alike impracticable and absurd. How can he do it ?

Then it is to be remembered, that if men had the leisure, they have not the *disposition*, to prosecute this momentous inquiry. Men in general do not like abstract studies, especially those which relate to their own condition and destiny. These things are put from them ; God is not in all their thoughts, and they desire not the knowledge of his ways ; but they betray a melancholy indifference to them. To say that such men, who have no taste for moral investigation and religious pursuits, should give themselves to such studies, to solve such anxious questions, is unquestionably most ridiculous.

But then it is suggested, that philosophers who devote themselves to such inquiries, may prosecute these studies for the instruction of others. This is a great concession, because if you would receive the testimony of the philosophers, why not receive the testimony of the prophets ? If you must have these truths at second-hand, and not by the discoveries of your own mind, surely the prophets deserve as much attention as the philosophers : Moses should be heard as well as Socrates ; and Paul should have an audience as well as the pedants of the schools. But let us ask, what have the old philosophers done to instruct mankind ? The greatest and the most honest of them have only confessed their ignorance. It is a striking fact that Xenophon has recorded this honest testimony of his master Socrates, who did not question the propriety or necessity of worshipping the Deity,

but thought that divine instruction and assistance was necessary to enable men to perform it in a proper manner, and, therefore, he advised his disciples to wait till God should make it known.

But it may be said, that since his days there has been a great deal done. True, my brethren, God has been manifested in the flesh; Christ Jesus has been preached by his inspired apostles; the pure morality of the Christian system has been diffused throughout Europe and a large portion of the civilized world, and has been extensively blended with the principles of social government and general legislation. Thus sceptical philosophers imagine that human nature has made astonishing progress through their efforts, while they forget that mankind are receiving the advantages which the high morality of Christianity bestows upon society.

To try this question honestly, you must go back to a period anterior to the Christian era, and ascertain what men at that period knew of the law and character of God, and of their duty to him and their fellow-creatures; or, if you please, you may travel out of the range of Christian influence. Go into the heart of China, and visit the secluded cities of Japan. Go into the deserts of Africa, and find men in a state of nature, and learn what their sages have taught them, and what they are without the influence of Christianity. Thus you will be able to ascertain how uncertain, limited, unsettled, and inoperative, all human opinions upon this great subject have been.

From these considerations, we are led to conclude that it was really necessary that men should be taught by a revelation from the Father of lights, seeing that they have not all the same powers of reasoning to prosecute the inquiry, that they have not the leisure which would be necessary to ascertain their duty, that most men are indifferent to that momentous subject, and that the wisest and the most laborious amongst them have betrayed or confessed the **fact**, that they need the teaching of the Father of their spirits, the God of the whole earth.

I remark, in the second place, that a revelation is desirable, *because our accountability is acknowledged*. I assume that every man in this assembly possesses a secret consciousness that he must give an account of himself to God, and that he looks forward with anxiety to the future. Now the question is, By what rule is that account to be judged? Have we an instinctive impression that we are accountable to our Maker; and, yet, has he given us no law by which our accountability is to be tested? The question then arises,

By what law is our conduct to be determined? To this, Lord Bolingbroke would have replied, "Men may know from the nature of things what is fit for them." Now what is meant by "the nature of things," it would, perhaps, be difficult to determine; but it is very obvious, that this answer would leave every man to become a law to himself, and that thus men would shift and change their code of morality according to circumstances. We see what is the influence of the law of the nature of things upon the characters of the heathen, who are without the revealed law of God. Their state was once garnished by the poetry which French philosophy adopted, and the virtues of the lovely children of nature were loudly celebrated; but the sober testimony of honest travellers exhibits man in his natural state as a poor, debased, unhappy outcast, the victim of the grossest vices and the most hateful passions, needing the mercy of his God, and that transformation which his grace can alone effect.

Besides which, there are many who feel that they have already transgressed. The conviction that you have sinned against God, I trust, is common amongst you. Now, how can "the nature of things" tell you in what way to avoid the consequences of your transgression? Without a revelation from God there is a dreadful uncertainty on this momentous subject: therefore, I think you will be prepared to concede, that the unveiling of these great secrets is most desirable, because without it, while men feel their accountability, they must confess their ignorance. Now what can we think of the character of the government of God, on the assumption that he has left the creatures, whom he holds to be accountable to his justice, ignorant of the law by which they are to be judged? What should we say, if the inhabitants of some distant colony of the British empire were to be visited with the vengeance of our imperial government for not obeying an order of council or an act of parliament of which they had never heard? Are they to be treated as rebels against the authority of the state, for violating laws that were never transmitted to them? You perceive, that where there is no law there can be no transgression; therefore it seems indispensable to the moral government of God, that he should reveal to men his holy will, and make known to them the principles on which he holds them accountable to his justice, and by which they will be judged in the final day.

Now we proceed, in the second place, to assert, that SUCH A REVELATION IS ACTUALLY POSSESSED. "He spake by the mouth

of his holy prophets," who were men of like passions with ourselves. The possibility of such a communication from the Father of spirits was never questioned by the ancient heathens, nor is it doubted by the myriads of pagans in the present age. What men, in all time, have believed and expected, must be considered reasonable. To this end, the Egyptians, the Assyrians, the Grecians, the Romans, all the nations of antiquity, consulted oracles, employed anguries, resorted to divinations. I do not say that those oracles were inspired, that those auguries were true, that those divinations were divine : no ; but as they were employed and resorted to by all classes in all countries in the extremity of distress, so they paid homage to the opinion, that a communication from God to men is both possible and necessary. Surely, then, we ought not hastily to dispose of a sentiment which has taken so powerful a hold of the judgments and the hearts of men ! "He that planted the ear, shall he not hear ? He that formed the eye, shall he not see ? He that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know ?" Most men will acknowledge that "every good gift cometh down from the Father of lights," and that all the talents of men are his gifts : even the skill of the ploughman who tills the soil comes from above, "for his God doth instruct him to discretion, and doth teach him : " and if we believe that God has been pleased to endow some individuals with the skill of the artificer, and some with the powers of genius, and to aspire to the regions of poetry ; is it a thing incredible, that God should communicate moral truths to others, and by his Holy Spirit make known to them those sublime verities which relate to his own nature and their common destiny ?

We believe, then, that holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. If it be asked in what way they were instructed, our appeal must be to the Holy Scriptures, where we learn, that sometimes they heard an audible voice ; that sometimes their eyes beheld visible appearances, and scenic representations of things to come ; that sometimes their fancies were unusually impressed, and the thoughts remained on their minds until they had recorded them ; and that sometimes their wills experienced an unusual impulse, by which they were urged to the performance of a certain duty, or to the declaration of a given truth. An objector may inquire, How are we to distinguish a true revelation from those erroneous and deceptive pretensions which have been made in every age ? We admit there have been impostors, but their very pretensions go to prove the reality of the thing they counterfeit. We

distinguish between the pretender to inspiration and the divinely commissioned seer, by a reference to their miraculous credentials. Take the case of Mohammed, for instance. He pretended to be inspired; but when he was challenged to work a miracle, he replied, that the Jewish prophets and Jesus Christ had worked miracles enough already, and when required to predict some event that was to come to pass, he owned that the keys of futurity did not hang at his girdle. Thus he neither ventured to confirm his mission by miracles, nor to authenticate his embassy by a prediction; and the lapse of ages has witnessed the decay of his empire, and the growing scepticism of his followers. Such was not the case with the prophets and apostles of the church: they proved their mission by a miraculous authority, by accurate predictions, and by the extraordinary harmony which prevailed throughout their common testimony. Let us look at these in detail.

We regard the authors of the Holy Scriptures to have been divinely inspired, *because of the authority their injunctions exercised*. The messages they delivered to the Jewish people were often opposed to their tastes and habits; they often reprov'd their sins, and censured their national polity; and yet the people received those messages, obeyed those precepts, acted on those self-denying commandments. Now what, we ask, could induce such a nation as the Jews to obey the commandments of their prophets, and observe things which were in no way acceptable to them, unless they were convinced of their divine authority? And can we be surprised at their conviction? Moses, in the presence of the people, brought down from mount Sinai the code of moral law which is contained in the decalogue, and which had been given him by God himself. This communication was accompanied by thunder and lightning, fire and earthquake, about which there could be no mistake. And let none suppose that these phenomena were a fortunate coincidence to help an imposture, for Moses had announced to all the people the solemnity of the scene three days before it occurred. To deny the truth of these historical facts, or any other connected with the history of the Israelites, requires extraordinary hardihood, because there are no facts in the history of the world which can be compared with them for the completeness of their historical evidence. An individual who indulges in a spirit of scepticism respecting these and analogous facts, should study the evidence upon which all history is based, and after he has weighed the method of historical proof in general, if he possess an honest mind, we doubt not that he will

admit that the record of the Mosaic miracles comes down to us on evidence more satisfactory than the ordinary facts of history possess.

The argument, then, is this : we have a well authenticated record that the Jewish prophets confirmed their messages by miracles, which were witnessed by a million or two of people, who obeyed their messages on the authority of those miracles. Surely these men were the mighty power of God, or they never could have carried with them the minds of a reluctant people after this fashion.

Secondly, we regard these writings to be a revelation from God, *because of the harmony of their testimonies*. I have heard individuals confess that they could not understand the Bible, that its numerous and detached books, without order or connexion, on various subjects and in different styles, only confused them. It is true that there are sixty-six books in the Old and New Testaments, that those books were composed by thirty different persons of all classes of society, and of very different degrees of intellectual and literary attainments, during a period of more than one thousand years. It ought not to be expected, then, that there should be an entire agreement in style, or that there should be one consecutive narrative : but this we say, that in the whole volume there is an unity of sentiment, and a oneness of mind, which marks the impress of the great Author of the whole. Compare one part of the book with another, you will uniformly find a reverence for holiness, a regard to equity and truth, a compassion for the poor and needy, indignation against the oppressor, the unjust, and the unholy. You will find, that though the books were written by so many different persons, and at such remote periods, yet they happily accord in these grand characteristics. The church of St. Peter's, at Rome, was built by the treasures of nineteen popes, during the long period of one hundred and forty-five years, by twelve successive architects : but when completed, every spectator felt that the building was one great whole—it has unity of design, harmony and proportion in all its parts ; and why ? Because it was finished after the splendid conceptions of its great projector, Michael Angelo. And thus it is in the edifice of revelation, though it slowly rose during the period of a thousand years, though there were thirty different labourers employed in its erection, though they brought their materials from different sources, and fashioned them into different forms, yet still there is a harmony, a consistency, and a unity about the whole, which proclaim its origin in the mind of the Eternal.

Thirdly, we account this book to be the revelation of God, *because of the accuracy of its various predictions*. I wish every candid

inquirer present, who may doubt upon this subject, would give Dr. Keith's "Dissertations upon the Evidence of Prophecy" a prayerful and thoughtful reading. A perusal even of the abridgment of that excellent book, as circulated by the Religious Tract Society, will, in my judgment, be sufficient to demonstrate in the productions of the Holy Scriptures a foresight which no human sagacity could have suggested, a precision that God alone could exercise. Take as an instance the prophecies of Isaiah, concerning the overthrow of Babylon; they were written two hundred years before the destruction of that city took place; when that imperial metropolis was in the height of her glory, when she sat as a queen, and it seemed a thing as improbable as any improbable circumstance could be, that she should be brought to the dust: and yet Isaiah describes the utter desolation of that city as it continues to this day, as if he had seen it, like modern travellers, in the ruins of its overthrow; which proves, at once, that that God, who sees the end from the beginning, spake by him, and calls for our confidence in those predictions that are not yet fulfilled. Did time permit, I might speak of the prophecies concerning the Arab tribes, the destruction of Nineveh, Tyre, and Egypt, and especially of the dispersion of the Jews. O, when you pass through your streets, or the Jewish quarters of this city, and behold the descendant of Abraham, do not let him pass without saying, There is a witness to the historical and prophetic truth of the Bible.

We now ask you, brethren, Ought we to account it an unreasonable thing, that God should communicate his mind to men—that the Father of the spirits of all flesh should have access to the spirits he as formed? This has been believed by all the ancients: we have shown you it appears necessary from the state both of ancients and moderns. Is it, we further ask, unreasonable to believe that the authors of these books were inspired by God, when we consider the miracles they wrought, the harmonious testimony they delivered, and the accurate predictions which they recorded?

But the subject requires that I should speak of THE DESIGN OF THE REVELATION. God has spoken by his holy prophets; and what has he disclosed? He has made known what he requires of men, what he bestows on men, and what he designs for them in a better world.

God has made known by his holy prophets and apostles *what he requires*. The moral law is an epitome of that code by which every

individual, every family, and every society should be governed ; and if individuals would candidly examine the precepts of that code, they would find there are no objections, but such as human depravity suggests, to justify their resistance to such a law. It is a fence which divine mercy has put round a yawning abyss ; and every precept says to every man, “ Take heed—do thyself no harm.” O, how much misery would be averted if men would regard God’s laws ! They are “ holy, just, and good ;” and so perfect, that nothing can be added to them. Calmly ponder them, my hearers, and you will be compelled to exclaim with David, “ How excellent is thy law !”

We are thankful, then, for the preceptive code which is contained in the Scriptures ; and are thankful to have the law of ten commandments illustrated by the discourses of our Saviour and his apostles. He explains, in his beautiful sermon on the mount, the supremacy of the law of God, and shows that it extends to the purposes and thoughts of the heart : and we find in the precepts of the apostolical writings a carrying out of the great principles which are embodied in the Mosaic code, and their application to the state of our hearts towards God and our fellow-men. It is a mercy thus to have a light to our feet, and a lamp to our path. Instead of being left in uncertainty and doubt to say, “ Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, or appear in the presence of the most high God ?” we hear his voice, saying, “ This is the way ; walk ye in it.”

In the second place, we learn in this revelation *what God bestows*. Here we learn that he is a just God, and yet a Saviour. When we contemplate God in the works of his hand, there is much to make us afraid ; we perceive his power, and we also feel our guilt. It is this which causes us to shrink from the lightning’s flash ; and that causes us to apprehend death with disquietude and terror. But it is a mercy that, while conscience alarms us with a sense of guilt and danger, revelation teaches us how we may obtain pardon : for there it is written—“ There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.” When the prophet Micah, in the spirit of inspiration, contemplated the character of Jehovah, as contrasted with the gods of the heathen, he exclaimed, “ Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage ? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.” All the philosophers of all past time could not have disclosed such consolatory truths, could not have told us that God delights in mercy, that he pardons iniquity, that he passes

by the transgressions of men. They could not explain how the Governor of all could, consistently with his character, pardon sin; but we know he is "just, and the justifier of the ungodly," inasmuch as he gave his own Son to die, the just for the unjust, that he might bring sinners to God.

It is possible there is some one here present who has been for a long time in great disquietude about his sins, and has anxiously inquired, What must I do to be saved? Our reply from this blessed book is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." He asks, "But how shall I for the future please God? How shall I be kept from those evils which have already overtaken and wounded me, and well nigh slain me?" The answer is, "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness;" "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the lowly;" and every humble inquirer after his mercy shall "find grace to help him in the time of need." What consolation it is thus to know what God mercifully bestows on the sinful children of men. Reason cannot help us to these discoveries. I love the right exercise of reason; I delight in the study of God's works in nature; I am thankful for any hour of leisure which I can employ in such pursuits: but I feel that they cannot remove the burden that rests on my conscience as a sinner; that they cannot help me in the conflict which I have to maintain every day with sin, temptation, and care; that they cannot cheer me in the hour of personal sickness, of relative affliction, of awful bereavement, and certain death: and, therefore, I would embrace the Gospel myself, while I commend it to you as the solace of my own mind, and which, I earnestly pray, may be the consolation of yours.

This revelation not only speaks of what God requires, and what he bestows, but of *what he designs*. To an ordinary observer, the affairs of our world appear to be in a strange state of confusion; one empire rising and another falling; one system superseded by another, and one policy overthrown by another, and one generation following another; opinions, and nations, and generations battering together like the winds and the waves breaking upon the coast in turmoil and confusion. But the Bible teaches us to believe that God rides upon the whirlwind, and directs the storm: it is our mercy to know, that he controls all the contentions of the world, and makes all events to subserve the high purposes of his government. If sin could universally and finally triumph, God would be dethroned in the midst of the universe which he has made; but we learn from

this book, that it is his design, that as sin, with all its attendant miseries, has abounded, grace with all its varied blessings, shall much more abound. We believe, assuredly believe, that the Christian religion, not as established by designing statesmen—not as administered by surpliced infidels—not as corrupted by mercenary professors ; but as received by sincere believers, professed with simplicity, practised with sincerity, adorned by a holy, uniform, humble life, and diffused through all the private relations and public duties of life—then we believe, that it shall extend its influence throughout every land, and transform society by its holy energy. It is delightful to realize what Christianity has already effected for mankind, even amidst all the hinderances with which its professed friends have impeded its cause. Go back to that period which preceded its commencement, and see what a contrast human society presents now to its state then. And we anticipate the time, when the influence of Christianity shall be felt in every country, and when the world shall find its wretchedness ameliorated by the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Christianity has abolished slavery in Europe, and in most of the European colonies, and is still grappling with that monster evil in America, and will continue to contend with it in all the forms it assumes till there shall not be a slave on our earth. Christianity has combated with war and crime, and has mitigated the cruelty of the one, and the magnitude of the other : too often, indeed, has its hallowed cause been made the occasion of war ; but as the principles of the Prince of peace are understood and obeyed, men will learn to sing that anthem, “ Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will to men.”

Thus, brethren, we believe, therefore, from this holy volume, the word of God, that our heavenly Father designs to roll back the consequences of the curse, to restore the apostate children of men to his own image, and to receive them to an immortal state of blessedness, “ where they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light upon them, nor any heat ;” and where “ God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”

It is our duty to show, that the Christian religion is eminently reasonable ; but allow me to say, that I fear the difficulties which men generally urge on this subject, are rather the difficulties of the *heart* than of the *head*. I do not wish to indulge an ungenerous suspicion of any who may express their doubts respecting the divine authority of Christianity, nor to express an opinion on the moral conduct of those who oppose themselves to it, which might appear

to be censorious. But I have had to meet with men who have urged infidel objections one after the other with plausible anxiety, and who have afterwards confessed to me, that they pleaded those objections to justify their lives and conduct, which were inconsistent with the religion which they opposed. Having had such disclosures made to us, we are warranted to caution you not to make the common-place objections of unbelievers a covert for your sins. Be sure that the simplest way of being reconciled to God is, to break off from wickedness : “Let the wicked man forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts : and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him ; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”

But conceiving that there may be those present who sincerely doubt, concerning the authority of the Christian revelation, I would beg them to remember, that this is the greatest subject on which the human mind can be engaged. In a few years what will property, health, honour, or connexions be to you ? Nothing ; the world passeth away, and the fashion thereof : but this subject will rise in importance when every thing else wastes away ; and when friends, property, and prospects fade before your view, on the bed of sickness, and in the hour of death, then it will be seen that revelation alone can supply present support, or open the prospect of a blessed immortality. Let me entreat you, then, to seek after it now, and give its claims a prayerful, honest examination. Look to the Father of spirits, the fountain of life. He giveth grace to them that ask it : may you seek it and enjoy the blessing ; and the praise shall be his. Amen.

THE CHARACTER DESCRIBED IN THE SEVENTH CHAPTER OF THE ROMANS.

REV. J. LIEFCHILD,
BARBICAN CHAPEL, NOVEMBER 15, 1836.

“ For I delight in the law of God after the inward man : but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God ; but with the flesh the law of sin.”—ROMANS, vii. 22—25.

THE great Christian duty of mortification of sin is but seldom entered into, either in the discussion of the pulpit or the study of the Christian. Yet how plainly are we urged to this. “ Mortify, therefore,” says the apostle, “ your members which are upon the earth.” The “ members” to be “ mortified,” and which are “ upon the earth,” are the dispositions and the affections of our corrupt nature, which being excited by, and operated upon, through the members of our bodies, are in a manner identified with them, and called by their name.

These affections and these dispositions are the root operating through the members of the body, and covering them with an evil produce. But the regenerate are the subjects of another root ; or, to speak properly, this root in them is to be changed ; a new and vital sap circulates through all its branches ; subduing, in a manner, the former produce, and covering them with another of a different kind. This produce is peculiarly of a spiritual character ; there is nothing analogous to it in nature, but it is the case with every believer in the Gospel. Therefore you read so frequently in the New Testament of the “ old ” and the “ new ” man ; of the “ outward ” and “ inward ” man ; of the “ flesh ” and the “ spirit.” “ The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh ; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.” “ If ye live after the flesh ye shall die ; but if, through the spirit, ye do mortify the deeds of the flesh, ye shall live.” “ Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth.”

The great Christian duty of the mortification of sin, is surely worthy a distinct and whole discourse.

Let us attend to the commencement of this conflict in the formation of the Christian character ; the illustration and the confirmation of this, supplied in the representations of the chapter before us ; and to the points of difference between the commencement of the Christian life and its more advanced course.

Attend to THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE STRUGGLE OF SIN IN THE VERY FORMATION OF THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER. It is always interesting to trace any grand results to their beginning ; to trace the full-grown tree to the first seed in the earth—the mighty empire to its first few huts—the world of ideas in the philosopher's mind to the first faint conception of his early childhood and youth. Equally so it is to trace the mature and confirmed character of the Christian to its incipient struggles and its very formation ; and much more so, for in all the others we have no particular interest, but here we are all of us individually and everlastingly concerned.

Now this process—the formation of the Christian character—must be described generally. The time during which it takes place is much longer in some than in others : the connexion and the order of the various parts are not so clearly perceived by some as by others, nor the circumstances with which they are attended ; but, generally speaking, there are three features belonging to it by which it is to be characterized.

The first is, *the rectification of our judgment on the subject of our relation to God*. This is what is called *conviction of sin*. It arises from a perception of the meaning of the law of God, as explained and ramified throughout the Scriptures. To that law there is an echo in every man's conscience : but conscience is dulled by the fall, deadened by the influence of visible objects over the mind through the medium of the senses of the body, perverted in its designs by the dictates of self-love and the false opinions of men around us. Therefore conscience needs to be both awakened and informed : and this is accomplished by the Scriptures—not in themselves, but by a divine influence upon the mind, arresting their attention to them, and placing them in order before it. The sinfulness of human actions now begins to appear : things once deemed innocent are now seen to be evil, and sins once deemed trifling are now felt to be awful : custom can no longer sanction vice, nor fair

appearances conceal their vileness. The law appears before such a man, glaring on him with its avenging eye, and reiterating its demand "Pay me what thou owest." God appears before the man, seeming to say, "I formed thee; I endowed thee with all the powers thou possessest; I have encompassed thee with mercies: and yet thou rebellest against me; thou hast violated all my laws, and I am Judge of all the earth, and must do what is right. Thou must be brought into judgment; thou must appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, to give an account of the deeds done in the body, and to receive according to what thou hast done, whether it be good or bad." Now this conviction the mind cannot rid itself of: it strips the mind of its vain hope of escaping divine justice: the judgment is now informed, as well as aroused, upon the subject of man's relation to God.

This conviction of sin may be produced *gradually*; it may take a long time in producing, or it may be accomplished more suddenly. The separate particles of which it is composed, so to speak, may be so small, and so imperceptibly produced, that, when complete, the individual hardly knows how he became possessed of it. It may be attended with *terror and wild alarm*, or it may be not so, and be most calm and serene. *This* may arise from one of two causes. The individual may have been *preserved from gross sins*, and then he cannot feel, when convinced, the terror which gross sin produces. Or this conviction may be *received in close connexion with the remedy provided for sin*, and this alarm thereby be prevented, or considerably reduced. If the jailer at Philippi, when terrified at the earthquake, thinking it would lead to his destruction, had known beforehand that it was only to lead to the liberation of Paul and Silas, his alarm would have been considerably lessened. But where the sin has been great, or where there is no proper discovery of the remedy provided for the case, the agony has been dreadful; the agony, I mean, arising from the sense of sin and the burden of guilt. Men have sometimes envied the brutes; they have wished to be a bird singing in the air: they would have forgone all the powers of a rational soul to be freed from a countenance.

The second feature of this process, the formation of the Christian character, is, *a strife on the part of the mind to get out of the state*, either without a clear discovery of the Gospel mode of deliverance, or with a partial and ineffective application. That conviction of sin and of our perilous condition, which has no influence on the conduct, is not a true conviction: there is no Spirit of God, or power of

truth in it. It is a meteoric fire flashing across the mind, but not having one beam of vigour in it. But where there is a settled rectification of the judgment on the subject of our relation to God, there will be a strife on the part of the mind to get out of its awful condition. It will see in sin that which makes it afraid of it: it will see the law of God to be just and right: it will justify God from all unnecessary rigour in his severest inflictions: it may even see Jesus Christ as the way, by his oblation, to obtain pardon of God, and resort to him for that very pardon. But it has not at present a sufficient knowledge of its imbecility to good; the pride of moral ability still influences it: it cannot admit the representation of Scripture, that we are without strength as well as without holiness; and it does not subscribe to the declaration of the apostle, that we are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing that is good, until that declaration come corroborated by experience, and demonstrated by repeated and painful facts.

Now it is that the most painful part of the Christian life commences. The individual, from a perception of the holiness of God and the evil of sin, sets himself to avoid sin: he resolves to forsake it, and to renounce it for the future; he vows to do so; he engages to God that he will do it, and subscribes the engagement, perhaps, with his own name, and sometimes (as was the case with Mr. Robert Hall's father) with his own blood: this he binds himself to do. But sin—strong as nature within him, indignant at the restraint imposed upon it—like a mighty torrent before a feeble barrier, collects all its strength, and bears down all before it. It makes him sensible of its strength by the vanity of his efforts to check it. Temptation takes him as easily as the whirlwind lifts a straw, and whirls him about in the air. "Our iniquities like the wind have taken us away." He resolves in secret that he will pass by the house where he had sinned; but when he comes to it, like the moth before the flame, he hovers and struggles, and at length goes in. He is adamant in the closet to impressions of external objects that are sinful, and therefore goes fearlessly among them; but when there, he is like melted wax before the fire. He returns to renew his defeated resolutions, but only to have them defeated again; with longer or with shorter intervals to allow for hope to rear its head, but only to be more fatally and fearfully crushed. In what a state of dissatisfaction and uneasiness must this leave the mind! It is the state so truly described by the poet, and to which the heart of every Christian, at one time or another, more or less responds:

“ Now I repent, and sin again ;
 Now I revive, and now am slain ;
 Slain with the same unhappy dart,
 Which O too often wounds my heart.”

I come now to the third feature which completes the process of the formation of the Christian character ; and that is, *a clear discovery of the Gospel mode of deliverance, and the full application of the mind to it.* Now commences the life of faith ; for as that which is sown is not quickened except it die, so the faith that gives the mind up to Christ, to be saved by his merits, and sanctified by his grace, arises out of the death of self-conflict. “ Ah ! ” says the man whom we have been describing, “ what a miserable sinful creature am I ! Alas ! I sin in spite of myself : and this free-born soul that I once talked about, alas ! it is a poor, miserable, enthralled, and captive creature. Who shall deliver me ? Where is he that shall emancipate me ? But stay. Is there not a glimpse of hope in the Gospel ? Does not Jesus Christ appear there possessed of omnipotent grace, as well as of a sufficient sacrifice : and is he not ready to impart it to all who cast themselves upon it, and so to become greater in them than he that is in the world ? Lord, I am oppressed ; undertake for me. O Jesus, be my deliverer, my sanctifier as well as my Redeemer, my Jesus, and my Lord ? ” What is the consequence ? A sweet and soothing peace takes possession of his mind : love to Jesus arises out of this view of him, this discovery of him : heavenly things and spiritual duties become attractive to him : there is a counter attraction now placed in the mind to that of sin ; there is a principle formed in the mind, and fixed there, directly opposed to sin, and getting the mastery over it. The struggle may be great, may be violent : but grace is sure to prevail, and every fresh victory leads to a further one ; until the very habits and tastes of the mind become on the side of piety, and the man feels as in the firm grasp of the hand of his God. This is what is called, being “ born of the Spirit,” being “ regenerated,” being “ converted : ” and now commences the settled and general victory over sin.

This seems to us to be a fair, though brief, account of the process which takes place in the formation of the Christian character, and the first struggle and conflict with sin.

Let us now attend to THE ILLUSTRATION AND CONFIRMATION OF ALL THIS, SUPPLIED IN THE REPRESENTATIONS BY THE APOSTLE, IN THE CHAPTER BEFORE US. In these representations the apostle

speaks of himself. Those who were early enough to hear the chapter read—which, perhaps, it was important they should have been, to be reminded of its general tenor—may remember how, throughout the chapter, the apostle speaks in his own person, and of himself. “I was alive,” says he, “without the law once; but when the commandment came (with power), sin revived, and I died:” “The good that I would, I do not; the evil that I would not, that I do:” “I am carnal, sold under sin:” “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?” It is of himself that he speaks, but of himself as the representative of a certain class. He is not speaking here of what was peculiar to him of all individuals of the human race; but of what was peculiar in him in common with them who possessed a similar experience. The question is, *To what stage of experience* does he allude in reference to religion? There are two adverse opinions upon this point.

It is the opinion of several eminent commentators that he here refers to himself *in an unconverted state*, and that he is speaking of men in an unconverted state, and under the law, and of those natural notions and approbation which they have of what is good, though quite unable to follow it. They maintain that the language throughout this chapter would not suit any other than an unconverted man, inasmuch as in the conflict stated between sin and the law, sin is represented in every instance as getting the victory. They observe that none but an unconverted person could properly use this language: “The good that I would I do not; the evil that I would not, that I do:” “I am carnal (fleshly), sold under sin (its bond-slave):” “Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” And with regard to the expressions of approbation of the law of God, and “consenting to it that it is good;” they say that these are sentiments which have been uttered by heathen moralists themselves. They quote the poets, where one says that he had two souls, one that was inclined to good, and another that prevented him from following his intentions. Another exclaims in language often used, “I see the better, and approve it too; but follow the worse.” And a third uses almost the very language of the apostle himself, when, after a strong complaint of this nature, he exclaims, “Who—where is he that shall deliver me?” It is the opinion, therefore, of several eminent commentators that the apostle is here referring to man under the law and in an unconverted state; in which opinion they have been joined by an American divine of great note, whose work is now circulating amongst us.

But I think this opinion to be wrong, for these two reasons. First: *It is contrary to all that we know of the apostle and his history.* When was he ever in this state of bondage to sin? Before conversion he was a pharisee, and one of the strictest sort: he was not only in his own opinion free from this miserable bondage to sin of which he here speaks, but he imagined that he was able to keep all the law of God, and even to do more than God required. He was flushed with false hope, and alive to a vain confidence, up to the very moment of his being on the way to Damascus, when, at the voice of Christ, or rather at his appearance, he fell down dead as a pharisee, and rose up a disciple of Jesus. Therefore it cannot be of himself in an unconverted state that he here speaks.

Again: we think *the language employed in this chapter of willingness to good, and unwillingness to evil, far too strong for any man in an unconverted state.* Can any such man say of all the evil that he does, that he “would not?” Can such a man say, “I delight in the law of God after the inward man?” What! does he then delight in all the parts of the law of God; in those parts which accuse, and condemn, and curse him? Is his mind so thoroughly conformed to that of God as to approve all that He loves, and to hate all that He hates; and that in a spiritual manner, “after the inward man?” In spite of Moses Stuart himself I cannot subscribe to this opinion.

But there is another opinion totally adverse to this—that the apostle is here speaking in his state as a Christian at the time he wrote this epistle; that is, *in the character of a matured and confirmed Christian.* This has been the opinion of the generality of commentators and divines of the Calvinistic school, from the time of Augustan nearly down to the present day. They contend, in support of it, that the conflict with sin is always the same in the Christian; and some have gone so far as to assert that “the old man” in the Christian is as strong at the last moment of his life as it was the first moment of his conversion. This opinion, however, I conceive to be equally wrong with the other, for the following reasons.

It does not agree with the design of the apostle in this chapter, and in the whole of this epistle: for the epistle is argumentative, and every separate part must have a bearing on the general design. The design of the apostle in this epistle, was to convince, especially the Jews at Rome, that the law of God was neither an instrument of justification nor of sanctification; but the gospel of both. He has

shown in the previous chapters, that it was not an instrument of *justification*, for it could only convince and condemn; and, therefore, all who were justified, were justified by "faith in the Lord Jesus Christ without the deeds of the law." In *this* chapter he begins to show, that neither was the law an instrument of *sanctification*, in that it was "weak through the flesh;" that it could only stir and goad sin by being used to oppose it; that, therefore, we must look out for something else; and that this was, the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Now how would it have accorded with this design, to have shown that the Christian, in his mature and confirmed state, would not be able to keep the law, nor to become sanctified? That would be proving too much; that would be proving, not only that the law, but the Gospel also, could not be the instrument of sanctification, and would be quite foreign to his design. Therefore, we conclude, he could not be referring to the matured and confirmed Christian.

And as it does not conform to his design, *so neither does it agree with the progressive representations of this and the following chapters.* The seventh chapter of the Romans should never have been separated from the eighth: if it stops at the close of that, it stops in the midst of a consecutive and progressive representation. And who does not see that the man in the eighth chapter is in a very different state from the man in the seventh, though the same man? In the seventh, he says, "The good that I would I do not; and how to perform that which is good I find not:" "I am carnal, sold under sin:" "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?" But towards the end, he exclaims, "I thank God, Jesus Christ my Lord." Then he goes on in the eighth chapter to say, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Now to say that the apostle in the seventh chapter had been describing a Christian in his high state, is to say that he might get much higher in the present life, for the eighth chapter evidently places him so: and therefore I conclude, that in the seventh chapter he could not be describing the Christian in his confirmed and matured condition.

For, thirdly, *it is not agreeable to truth and experience.* It is not true of confirmed and matured Christians that they always do the evil they would not, and that they always fail to do the good that they would. It may be true of some half-hearted and sluggish Christians: *they* may be "carnal, sold under sin;" their "old man"

may be as strong in them at the last as it is at the first. But it is not true of such Christians as Paul, who tells us, that he “kept under his body,” and “brought it into subjection,” and that he had “a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men.” It is not true of such Christians as the apostle John describes, when he says, “Whoso is born of God, doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” Nay, what does David say of the working of the principle of regeneration in the elect of God under the former economy? He says, “They also do no iniquity; they walk in thy way:” and of himself, he says, “I was also upright before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity.” Look at these portraits, and then look at the portrait in the seventh of the Romans, and say whether that can be the portrait of a confirmed and matured Christian.

Then what is the alternative? Look at the person which I described in the commencement, in the incipient stages of formation of the Christian character. See if his case does not agree with every part of the representation in the chapter before us, and with the design of the apostle in writing this epistle. So exactly does it agree that such persons unconsciously have made use of the language of the apostle to describe their diversified feelings. They “consent to the law that it is good;” they “delight in it;” from the working of the new principle which is formed within their breast: they strive to keep it, but they fail, they faint, they fall, and that rapidly, as we have already stated, until in a fit of desperation they cry, “Who—where is he that shall deliver me?” Then they catch a glimpse of the mode of deliverance revealed in the Gospel; they enter into “the liberty wherewith Christ has made his people free;” and the eighth chapter is descriptive of their experience—“the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in them who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

There is one formidable objection to this view, which it would not be fair in me to pass over. It may be asked, At what period can the apostle be thought to represent himself as having this precise experience? Was he not a Pharisee up to the time of his conversion? And did not his miraculous conversion in one instant change him into a decided disciple of Jesus Christ? How then can the representations of this chapter be true of him in this point of view?

I conceive the objection may be disposed of in two ways. First: *the apostle is speaking of what is common to converted persons at*

large. If, therefore, his miraculous and extraordinary conversion had not allowed him to go through that precise experience, he would not be prevented from speaking of himself in this manner, as that which belongs to all converted persons. Such a mode of speaking is by no means uncommon in the Scriptures. To allude but to one instance: the apostle puts himself among those persons who will be alive on the earth when Jesus Christ shall come to judge the world. He says, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye."

But, secondly: it is not improbable that *the apostle did go through something of this kind* during the interval which elapsed between his saying to Christ on the way to Damascus, "What wilt thou have me to do?" and Ananias coming to him at Damascus, to give him sight along with the gift of the Holy Spirit. During those three days and nights that elapsed, we know that he was marvelously and miraculously taught of God; and he might learn in those three days and nights all that about sin, about the excellence of the law, about human imbecility, and about the mode of divine deliverance which he here describes, and which many often do not learn in as many years.

Thus I have detailed to you our reasons for believing that the apostle in the seventh chapter is speaking of himself and Christians, not in their confirmed and matured state, but in the introductory stages, and during the process of the formation of their Christian character. If I am anxious for you to embrace this view, it is not because it is mine, but because I hold it to be correct, and to be of the greatest importance, and because I conceive the other view to be most pernicious. It came in, as I have already hinted, by Augustan. Before his time, the early Christians never supposed the apostle in this chapter to be speaking of the confirmed and advanced Christian; neither did Augustan himself till he had a controversy with Pelagius. Pelagius contended that man had not fallen altogether from good; that there is a principle left in him which inclined him to approve of that which is good, and to seek after it: and he quoted this very chapter in support of his opinion. Augustan, finding himself hard pressed, went to the other extreme, and denied that the apostle was speaking here as an unconverted man, and contended that he was speaking as a confirmed and mature Christian: and that has been the notion of many divines since that time, and I cannot help thinking, with a very fatal influence upon cha-

racter. My conviction is, that many a Christian has submitted to a defeat from temptation, and yielded many a victory to inbred sin, from thinking that such was the case with the great apostle, who, but for that thought, would have been incapable, and properly so, of such pitiful succumbency. If we mistake our rule we shall go wrong with greater obstinacy than if we had no rule to go by. If the advanced Christian goes by the experience of Paul when he was only a novice, how can he ever make any proficiency? Whether this and other causes have not operated to prevent Christians from growing in holiness, and gaining the victory over sin, let the melancholy confessions of their diaries declare.

Is it asked, Why dwell on such minute parts of Christian experience? We account them, my brethren, of the greatest importance. We think them of importance to correct false views of religion. How many are apt to suppose that religion consists in a few feelings and sentiments of a religious nature, and in a superficial change of the mind and of the behaviour! How many suppose, that having undergone these feelings, they are safe for eternity! There may be individuals here, who on that ground are imagining that they are in the way to heaven. You have experienced some feelings and sentiments of a religious nature, and some superficial change has been wrought in you; and do you not hope that you will go to heaven? Do you not expect you will be found in heaven? And yet you are well persuaded that it would be almost a burlesque to talk of your having “crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts”—of your having been “delivered from the law of sin” in your minds—of the law of God being fulfilled in you as “walking not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” But, my friends, religion is a change of *character*; it is the death of sin in the soul, commencing with a painful conflict, but proceeding to an habitual and a general victory: and nothing short of this will warrant the hope of a state of salvation.

It may be feared, that some persons, out of sympathy to individuals in dying circumstances, or to their relatives, allow them to suppose, that their feelings of contrition in those moments of sorrow for sin are real repentance, and warrant the conclusion of a state of salvation. I wish that such excessive pity for their fellow-creatures may not be found chargeable with the delusions of men’s souls, and the denial of the sacred Scriptures. There is always a great uncertainty about the character of a death-bed repentance—whether it be from nature or from grace—whether it be sorrow for sin on account of its consequences, or as an insult to the Majesty of heaven, and

the grace of Jesus Christ. I knew a young woman, several years ago, in this neighbourhood, who had some powerful impressions of a religious nature: but she drew back from God, and went again into the world. She was laid upon a sick, and apparently, dying bed, and sent for me to visit her. All her impressions revived, and she then concluded that there was a real work of grace in her mind. Contrary to expectation she recovered, and after a time again went back into the world. Again she was ill; again she sent for me; again her convictions returned: but she died. Could I state the latter repentance to be more effectual than the former? The survivors of such persons must always stand in doubt as to where they are gone. Religion is nothing but a total change of character—is the death of sin in the soul, commencing in a painful conflict, and leading on to a general and habitual victory.

How much is there in this subject to reconcile all Christians to the sufferings of the present life! It is one great end of those sufferings to reduce sin within us. This regulates the time, and the measure, and the duration of their infliction. “Hath he smitten Jacob,” says the prophet, “as he smote those that smote him? or is he slain according to the slaughter of them that are slain by him? In measure, when it shooteth forth, thou wilt debate with it: he stayeth his rough wind in the day of the east wind. By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this is all the fruit to take away his sin.” Affliction is called *a fiery trial* for Christians; and it is to purge sin out of them by the co-operating grace of the blessed Spirit, as the fire purges the dross out of the metal. They serve to detect the sins in which we are living, as fire detects the presence of dross. They do it by leading us to consideration, and to inquiry after the cause whence they are sent upon us: and they do it by putting our boasted piety to the test. When we are in prosperity we think that we are trusting in God, that we have faith in things unseen; that we are not looking to the creature for happiness. But affliction comes and takes these things from us, takes away the prop on which we have been leaning: and then, by the misery we feel in consequence, we learn how sadly our hearts have departed from the Lord. Our hearts are like gardens, which require not only a general attention at all times to keep things in order, but which calls for different seasons to foster the growth of some plants, and to nip, and check, and destroy that of others. And when the Christian reflects on his liability to depart from God,

on his tendency to rest on worldly good ; when he thinks how apt he is to turn aside without checks, or not to go forward without strokes ; can he wonder that those checks and strokes will come ? As well might the sick man, in a state of convalescence, be surprised at the visit of the physician anxious for his perfect recovery, or at the reception from him of an unpleasant draught. And since there is so much sin in us, notwithstanding all our suffering, what would there have been, had we been entirely free ? Be reconciled, my brethren, to the sufferings of the present life, by the consideration of this their great design. “No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous : nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.”

Christians may learn from this subject to rejoice in the prospect of a better world. One great feature in the representation of that world is, that it will be without sin. The body which the Christian at death lays down, is to be divested of all its animal instincts and appetites, and shall be raised up again in a state adapted to a very different class of objects ; and shall have no evil desires to be excited, and no objects without to excite them. The soul of the Christian at the very moment of death will have been cleansed from all inherent and remaining impurity. It will be taken to dwell with “the spirits of the just made perfect,” with “an innumerable company of angels,” with “God the Judge of all,” with “Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel.” There it will remain till the morning of the resurrection ; and after that long state of purity, it will come, at the arrival of that great day, to take possession of its body, restored by Jesus Christ, and fashioned like unto his own glorious body. It will not fear to take possession of it again ; but will embrace it as Adam did his Eve, when presented to him adorned with every grace from the hand of her Creator.

“My purer spirit shall not fear
To put that body on :
Its tempting powers no more are there ;
Its lusts and passions gone.”

Then will commence the conqueror’s song. The groans of the Christian here, under the body of sin and death, will then be exchanged for praise, and the weapons of conflict for palm-branches of victory ; and every trophy be laid at the foot of Him through whom we were more than conquerors.

Christians ! be animated by this prospect. Remember that you

must fight in order to reign ; you must wrestle here with flesh and blood, and principalities and powers, if you would be more than conquerors. Remember, that if you depart not out of this world in the attitude of combatants, you must be denied to mingle in the joys and congratulations of victors. Christian ! dost thou complain of the combat ? In order to conquer thou must fight. Flesh and blood, earth and heaven, are thine enemies ; faith, and hope, and love, and every Christian grace, are thine armour : angels are thy witnesses ; and Christ is the captain of thy salvation, conducting thee from one victory to another ; and he will at last give thee the reward. On that day, thou shalt say, “ I have fought a good fight ; I have finished my course ; I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of glory, which God the righteous Judge shall give me at that day ; and not to me only, but to all that love his appearing.” Yes, from the height of that glory to which He is exalted, He now looks down on this congregation ; and to every Christian combatant in the assembly, he says (O ! let us hear his voice), “ To him that overcometh will I grant to sit down with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne.” And shall the empire of sin flourish in any of us ?

“ Lord, crush that empire with thy breath !

Its cursed throne must fall.

Ye flatt'ring lusts that work my death,

Fly ! for I hate you all.”

A SERMON TO SUNDAY-SCHOOL CHILDREN.

REV. J. SHERMAN,

SURREY CHAPEL, NOVEMBER 21, 1836.

"Come, ye children, hearken unto me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord."

PSALM xxxiv. 11.

Now this is the encouraging language of David to children in his age. It was the language of all the prophets, and it was the language of Jesus Christ, when he came in the flesh; he said, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not." This was his language just before he left this world to go to the Father: "Feed my lambs;" take care these children are instructed. It was the language of the apostles too, for they instructed Timothy and others, and were glad to see children surrounding them, to learn the way of the Lord. And whenever religion flourished, this was always the language of good and holy people; they were very anxious to instruct children. And whenever religion did not flourish, this was not their language; children were forgotten and passed by. And I can very easily, I think, make this plain to your comprehension. When a person does not care about his own soul, he does not care about the souls of others; and just in proportion as we care for the welfare of our own souls, we are very anxious for the souls of children and those that surround us.

Now about a hundred years ago there were no Sunday-schools in England; there was very little religion in this country, and therefore people cared very little about children, and about training them up in the fear of God. But it pleased God to raise up Mr. Whitfield and Mr. Wesley, two holy men, and others associated with them, who went about the country, and preached in all the towns and villages in all the kingdom. And then people began to feel some little concern about their souls. And as soon as they began to feel concern about their own souls, they began to feel concern about others' souls. They found their souls very precious, and then they began to think that other people's souls were as precious. And then, at last, they thought, that children's souls were as precious as

the souls of grown up people, and they began to be concerned about them.

Now it is not a hundred years ago, when Sunday-schools were established. No ; it is little more than fifty years ago. On September the 14th, 1831, we had a jubilee, and that was to commemorate the rise of Sunday-schools in England. Now we have a jubilee to-day, and that is to commemorate the rise of Sunday-schools in Southwark. And how did that happen ? Why, about fifty years ago, there was a gentleman of the name of Raikes, who lived at Gloucester ; and this gentleman first began to teach children on the Sabbath. A gentleman of the name of Stock, a minister, assisted him. And this was the way they began to do it—On a Sunday afternoon, they used to see idle and troublesome children all about the streets, thinking nothing about the Sabbath, or God, or eternity ; and a good thought rose up in Mr. Raikes's mind, "I might do some good with those children." So after the morning service was over, he spent the afternoon in teaching those children. First only a few came, and then a few more, and then a few more, till at last he was obliged to have assistance, because so many came. And then he published his plans all over the kingdom, and recommended others to try the same course. Dear children, these books came into the hands of Mr. Hill ; and he found there was good rising out of these schools, and, therefore, he was the first, it is supposed, to establish them in Southwark, if not in London. There was one established at Hoxton, I believe, a little while before, and they had their jubilee last year ; but he was a year after ; and we have one venerable friend, I believe, here to-day, who assisted in the formation of those schools. A great joy it must be to him, to notice the difference between the first little assembly and the vast number met here to-day, of which my eyes never saw the like.

Well then, these good people used to say to the children, "Come, ye children, hearken unto me ; I will teach you the fear of the Lord ;" hearken, and from this book we will teach you how to fear God, and go to heaven. Now it is just about this time fifty years ago, that a Sunday-school was established in this place ; and so we keep a jubilee.

And what is a jubilee ? Why a jubilee was a very celebrated day among the Jews ; it was a great day, and a day of rejoicing. How did it begin ? Why, on the morning of the day, the priests used to blow the horns ; and when these were blown, what think you followed ? Why, every man that was in debt, his debts were all

cancelled instantly; every poor prisoner that was bound in prison was liberated directly; every individual that had sold his inheritance, it returned to him; every servant that was a bond-servant, and not a hired servant, was free directly. Every thing that grew out of the ground that year was to be free for every body; and it was to be nothing but a year of rejoicing; so that the first day was a day of great and marvellous joy.

And surely this ought to be a day of very great joy to us, dear children and teachers. This jubilee among the Jews was intended to set forth the days of the Gospel. And what are those days? Why, the days in which we live, days when ministers and teachers proclaim liberty to all children that are bound captive by sin. They proclaim, that that inheritance, which every child has lost by transgression, is recovered in Jesus Christ, and that, by believing in him, they shall finally enter heaven. They tell them, that the way to this inheritance which they have lost, is by Jesus Christ, and that every child, that comes and casts its guilty soul upon him, shall be saved in the day of the Lord.

Now, dear children, it would be very wrong in me to detain you very long; and I shall, therefore, only just show you some of the causes why this is to be such a blessed day of rejoicing. Your teachers say to you, in all Sunday-schools, "Come, ye children, hearken unto me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord." The great object of Sunday-schools is, not merely to teach you to read; that is a very small part; the great object of Sunday-schools is, to teach you the fear of the Lord, to bring you up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," and to prepare you for heaven and a better world.

Now this day is to be a day of rejoicing in consequence of this; and for what are we to rejoice in it? Why, there are seven things that I want you all to recollect, and that are to be matters of joy to you to-day.

Now the first of these is, *that you were born in a country where Sunday-schools are established*: that is the first ground of rejoicing. Why were you not born in Turkey, in Spain, or in heathen lands? Why, till very lately there was not a country upon the continent that had a Sunday-school—France, or Spain, or any of those countries. In Turkey, you know the poor children are not cared for. In China, you know the poor children were not cared for till very lately. In all India they are not cared for; as soon as they are born, they are often killed; you have heard Mr. Williams say (some of

you, at least), that it was a very customary thing in some of the islands, not to find above two or three female children, for the mothers had destroyed them all; and as to the other children, they were all trained up to idolatry, and cruelty, and folly. Now what a blessed country ours is! I was thinking, as you were coming here what a beautiful sight it was to see those flags—all flags of peace, not war; and just while I was thinking, an ammunition-waggon passed, laden with some weapons, and three soldiers upon the horses. What a different sight was the one from the other! the one preparing for war, and the other for peace; the one exhibiting the implements of destruction, and the other showing signs of love, and harmony, and good-will, and singing the angels' song when Christ came—"Good-will to men." Now what a mercy, I say, it is, to live in such a country as this, where you are instructed, and trained, and brought up in the fear of God! This is to be one of the seven things that you are to give God thanks for, that you were born in a Christian country, where Sunday-schools are established.

The second thing for which you are to be thankful to-day is this, *that God put it into the hearts of teachers to care for you*; that is another matter of great thankfulness. O! what was there in you, dear children, that any body should care for you? You very well know that you do many things that you ought not to do, and that you have been very wicked, very disobedient to your parents at times, and very disobedient to those who have instructed you. O! how wonderful, that all these holy men and women should delight to teach you! Why, it would be a very great happiness to some of them to remain at home; that is to say, some of their domestic comforts are often sacrificed; they are not paid for teaching you, but they do it of their own good will; they make many sacrifices in order to teach you; often stay away from hearing sermons, that they may teach you; have to rise early in the morning, that they may get all their duties done, in order to teach you; come through the wet, and rain, and snow, to get to the Sunday-school to teach you. Now, why is this? Why did not these good people, like many others, let you pass into an eternal world, without a knowledge of Christ, or of the way to heaven? Whenever I see a teacher, my heart is lifted up to God, in thankfulness to him, that he has put it into the heart of that teacher not to be a drone, but to care for others. And this is a matter of thankfulness for you? What would have been the use, if Sunday-schools had been established, and there had been no teachers? And there are no teachers like those, who feel the value

of their own souls, and, therefore, feel the value of yours, and therefore instruct you, and lay themselves out for your welfare. Have you thought of these two things, dear children ; first, that you were born in a country where Sunday-schools are established ; and, secondly, that God put it into the hearts of teachers to care for you ?

Well, now, thirdly, there is another thing to be matter of thankfulness, and that is, *that you have had your health and your opportunities to come to school.* Now there are many children lame ; they cannot walk to school. There are some children blind, and who have not their eye-sight, and therefore cannot read. There are many children sick, and they are laid up, and cannot go to school, and lose the instruction which you have. There are many children that are so deeply sunk in vice and infamy, and their parents are sunk as low as they are, that they never will allow them to come. Now what a comfort it is to you, to think, “ Well, God has given me health ; I am able to go to school ; I am not lame, I can walk ; I am not blind, but I can see to read, and can join in this day of rejoicing.” What a matter of thankfulness to you, that you are not sick ! Why, how many of you know some of your little neighbours that are sick at home, that would be very glad to come here, but they cannot. Now you should pity them, and pray for them ; but surely it is matter of joy that you are able to come, that God has given you these various opportunities to be employed in this good work.

Then there is a fourth thing for which you are to be thankful, and that is, *that good people are willing to subscribe, and give you books and rewards in the Sunday-school.* O ! what a good thing it is to see the money come into the treasury, to provide you with the room, and a fire when you want it, and to supply the materials to carry on instruction, dear children, in the Sunday-schools ! Why, many years ago there were but a very few pounds raised for instruction, and now what hundreds and thousands are raised every year, a great deal of it out of your teachers’ own pockets. But what a matter of thankfulness, that there are people willing to give their money, as well as others willing to give their time, in order to instruct you in the nurture and admonition of the Lord !

But there are two or three things still further, more important than these, and which I want you especially to think of. I come, then, to the fifth thing for which you have to be thankful, and that is, *that some of you have learned to fear the Lord, while you are*

young. I think the first time that I began seriously to feel that I had a soul, and to look after my soul, was when I was about twelve years of age. Now I see a great many before me, this morning, who are that age and above that age. And I believe that there are many children here, who, through the instruction of their teachers, have begun to inquire about the way to heaven, and are very solicitous of entering the realms of everlasting glory; I hope not a few of you. Shall I tell you how I know it? Why, your teachers tell me that they observe that you are anxious, that you begin to inquire about Christ, about your sins, about the way to heaven. They tell me, that some of you love to retire to pray. They tell me, that some of you weep when you think of your former condition, and how you have been saved through grace alone, and that several of you are very, very desirous to learn of them what you must do to be saved. Now these are all good and hopeful signs; and I trust, dear children, that the Spirit of God has been at work in many of your hearts.

Now if any of you have these humble beginnings, this wish to go and pray in private, this anxiety about the way to heaven, O! thank God for it, and pray to him to increase it, and to make you never satisfied, until you know and love Christ as a Saviour, and as *your* Saviour, and your Friend. Pray to the Holy Spirit to come down upon you, and to renew your infant mind, and to qualify and fit you for a place in everlasting glory.

Well, now there is a sixth thing I want you to be thankful for, as this is a day of rejoicing, and that is, *that Jesus Christ welcomes every child that comes to him.* I have supposed that many of you are very anxious to come, and that many *have* come—come with many trembling steps—come with many anxious desires—but still they *have* come. But there are many that have not come. My dear children, it is a great pleasure to your minister to tell you, that Jesus Christ welcomes every child that comes to him. This is a day of jubilee, and on the day of jubilee your minister declares, that Jesus Christ will save every soul that wants to be delivered from sin. Hear him say this morning, My son, my daughter, “give me thine heart.” What a blessed jubilee would this be, if all of you, this morning, touched by the Spirit of the living God, were to make surrender of your hearts to Jesus Christ, and say, “O Lord, I have been Satan’s till now; now I will be thine!” O! wonder that Jesus Christ should ask you to become his children, wonder that he should ever take any notice of you! Who are you, that he should take

notice of you ? And yet he says to every child that is present to-day, My son, my daughter, "give me thine heart." This is to be matter of rejoicing, that there is a way to be saved, that Jesus Christ is the way to be saved, and that he is now at the right hand of God, and that God has given him the gift of the Holy Ghost to pour out upon all children.

Well now, there is another matter of this rejoicing to-day, the seventh thing ; and that is, *that many children from Sunday-schools have gone to heaven.* O what a matter of rejoicing is this. I have visited one from a Sunday-school, and as she was dying she said to me, " Sir, I was"—this was a little girl, that was ten years old—" Sir, I was very wicked before I went to the Sunday-school ; I used greatly to disobey my parents, and to sin against God ; but I bless God that my teacher was very kind to me, and, though I was often very obstinate, yet she used to teach me so kindly and so gently, that she broke down my temper, and she taught me to love Christ ; and so by his grace I now have no fear to die." I asked her what her hope was that she should be saved ; and stretching out her little hands, which were nothing more than bone and skin hardly, she said, O, Sir, Jesus Christ is my only hope ; I rest upon his precious blood, and because he died for children, I hope to enter glory."

Now I know that this is not an extraordinary case, but that there are many, very many children whose teachers have seen them pass from their death-beds to an eternal world ; seen them go up to be where Christ is, and to dwell with him for ever and for ever. And is not this matter of rejoicing ? Why, many of your scholars are not with you this morning, but they look down upon you from heaven ; and it is a matter of rejoicing that they were trained up in a Sunday-school, and have passed into heaven where Christ is.

Now I am going to tell you again what these seven things are. You have to be thankful, first, that you were born in a country where Sunday-schools are established ; secondly, that God put it into the hearts of teachers to care for you ; thirdly, that you have had your health and your opportunities to come to school ; fourthly, that good people are willing to subscribe, and give you books and rewards in the Sunday-school ; fifthly, that some of you have learned to fear the Lord while you are young ; sixthly, that Jesus Christ welcomes every child that comes to him ; and seventhly, that many children from Sunday-schools have gone to heaven. This is the substance, then, of what I shall say to you this morning. This is to be matter of great rejoicing to you.

But I look round upon THE TEACHERS to-day, and they will suffer me to say a word to them.

My dear friends, except at my own place at Reading, which would not hold one half the number that I see here to-day, I have never seen such a sight as this before. And it has been a most pleasing sight to me, while I have thought that many of these children, gathered from spots and places, sinks of iniquity, where their spiritual welfare never could be taken care of, are brought under the charge of those who have learned of Christ, and desire the welfare of others. To you let me say, be cheered in your work. I think, if any person had never been a Sunday-school teacher, and saw this sight, he would wish to be one to-day, to have some share in bringing this regiment into the heavenly world, and taking all these children, and forming them as soldiers for the Prince of peace, and blessings to the world. I know your work is arduous; I know your sacrifices are great; I know your difficulties are often very many. But still your reward is in your work, and is infinitely sweeter than all difficulties which you can encounter. I say that Sunday-school teachers, and Christian Instruction teachers, and all individuals of that class, are greater patriots than those that enter the field of battle, and stand at the cannon's mouth; for they, by such means, are endeavouring to stop the progress of vice, and the horrors of war, and make people learn to live happily.

And there are three things I wish to impress upon your minds—the worth of the soul, the shortness of time, and the value of the blood of Christ. These three things will inspire you for the work. Think of the value of one soul; O! who can tell of what value is a soul? Think of the shortness of time; in a very little while all your opportunities for doing good must pass away. And think of the value of the blood of Christ, that he has redeemed you, and blessed you for ever. These things will inspire and animate you in your work, and give you courage and joy, while prosecuting it.

And now, let me say to those who support Sunday-schools, if any should be here besides the teachers, who are interested in Sunday-schools, let me just say, how cheering is this sight! You are all instruments in training up souls for heaven, if you are subscribers to these schools. You are to be encouraged in your work. You will never regret the giving of a small portion of your property to such a blessed work as this; you will be amply repaid in the considerations of your own conscience, and in the contemplation of so great a work

I think I saw to-day some few children coming here with the others, who do not belong to Sunday-schools. Now if there are a few such children here to-day, just let me say a word to them. Perhaps some of you go to boarding-schools, and receive a superior education ; you have parents that can afford to send you. What a mercy is this to you, if you have parents who wish you well, and endeavour to train you up themselves, or send you to places where you can be trained up without the aid of Sunday-schools. Improve your time, dear children. Be very anxious to gain all the instruction you can. And, above all, gain a knowledge of Jesus Christ and his salvation ; else, many of these children in the Sunday-schools will rise up against you at the judgment, because you have greater opportunities, better means of attaining a knowledge of the way to heaven than these children—they will rise up and condemn you, if you learn not to serve the Lord.

Now, dear children, I have done. I said I would not detain you long, and I will not, because you know children soon get wearied with long discourses, and I am very anxious that you should make this a day of rejoicing. You recollect the seven things I have told you are to be matters of rejoicing. You are to carry these seven things home, and tell them to your fathers and mothers, and talk of them to-day, and when you go to bed at night, you are to return thanks to God for them ; and all through this year remember this is the fiftieth year, and it is to be a year of jubilee ; and every Sunday you are to think of these seven things, and you are to endeavour to get them in your minds, so that they may be matters of joy all the year round. O ! that God may enable you to do it ; and then, at the last day, may the minister, who now speaks to you, meet you in heaven, with all your dear teachers. This is a great company ; but what will that be, when all shall have white robes and palms in their hands, and shall stand before the throne, and all have harps and songs, and all praise and love Jesus Christ ?

“ O ! may we bear some humble part
In that immortal song ; ”

and every individual now present, in that solemn year of jubilee, be gathered to Christ, and serve him, and rejoice in him !

THE CONCURRENT TESTIMONY OF THE SPIRIT AND THE BELIEVER

REV. H. MELVILL, B.D.

CAMDEN CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, NOVEMBER 27, 1836.

“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.”—
ROMANS, viii. 16.

You will remember, that in those parting discourses, which were designed to sustain the sinking spirits of his followers, Christ dwelt much on the coming of the Holy Spirit in the character of a Comforter. “The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things:” and “I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth:” and yet again, “When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.”

In accordance with this title of the Holy Ghost, you must be aware that the joys and consolations bestowed on the righteous are ascribed ordinarily to the third person in the Trinity. In writing to the Galatians, St. Paul gives a catalogue of “the fruits of the Spirit;” and in this catalogue you find “joy” and “peace.” You know, moreover, that this Spirit is spoken of as “sealing believers to the day of redemption;” as setting them apart for God, so that themselves and those around them have evidence, that they belong to the heavenly family.

It cannot be necessary, that we go at length into proof, that the title of *Comforter* is fulfilled by the Spirit. The Spirit is that divine agent who acts upon the human mind, and whose especial part it is, in the economy of redemption, to procure admission for the truths of Christianity. Hence it necessarily follows, that neither the promises nor the threatenings of God’s word can produce their right effect, except as handled and applied by the Holy Ghost. And of course, if this divine Being must carry home to the conscience and the heart the statements of the Bible, ere they can alarm or animate,

he must be emphatically the Comforter, as having at his disposal the whole material of comfort.

But the more we magnify the office of the Spirit, the greater importance we attach to his operations, the more deeply interesting becomes the inquiry, Are we ourselves possessed of this Spirit? In regard, for example, to this character of a Comforter, if no spiritual consolation can be such as it is safe to receive, unless it is the result of the working of the Holy Ghost, of what unspeakable moment is it that we determine whether any hope that we cherish, any joy that we experience, can fairly be traced to this divine authorship. We need not say, that, if there be probability of mistake, it is of first-rate importance that we obtain some definite rule by which to distinguish a false hope from a genuine. If, indeed, a man may feel confident that he is safe for eternity, and yet his confidence be wholly without scriptural warrant, there cannot be a question with which we can have more concern than how must we determine our true state before God.

And our intention is, on the present occasion, to furnish at least certain elements from which the reply to this question may be framed. We, therefore, select as our subject of discourse, a passage of scripture which is often referred to, and perhaps often misunderstood, when the point to be described is that of the evidence we may gain of our condition before God. The apostle affirms generally, in our text, with regard to true believers, that "the Spirit itself beareth witness with their spirits, that they are the children of God." He here undoubtedly speaks of some testimony, which the Holy Spirit affords to an individual, and which may assure that individual of his adoption into the family of heaven: and we are bound to conclude from this, that it is the office of the Holy Ghost to convey to us intimations of our safety, and furnish us with that internal evidence which may assure us of our justification with God. But then, it yet remains to be decided, what this testimony of the Holy Spirit is—of what nature, and in what way communicated. Men will tell you, that the testimony is something not to be described; a writing on the tablet of the soul, to be read only by the individual to whom it is addressed; a secret whisper which none can hear but the single party mysteriously addressed. Now we are amongst the last who would deny that the Holy Spirit may occasionally impart to believers in Christ assurances of their safety, which must, from their very nature, be limited to themselves. We are quite aware, that those who wait earnestly on the Lord, and

work out salvation with unwearied assiduity, are often privileged with seasons in which they enjoy such foretastes of heaven, and enter into such communings with God, as furnish them with a kind of irresistible proof that they are appointed to the inheritance which fadeth not away : and we are equally aware that this proof, though most convincing to themselves, is not of such a nature that it can be brought to bear upon others. We quite admit, that good men may often enjoy, in the retirements of their closets, such manifestations of the divine favour, as furnish full ground of assurance that they are pardoned and accepted : and yet, when they come back into the world, bring nothing to which they can appeal, as warranting their confidence. There may unquestionably be a secret consciousness, a testimony mysteriously sent into the heart, the whisper of a voice which could not be heard beyond the confines of the soul, but which there spoke thrillingly and persuasively ; and these may satisfy the favoured individual that he is the heir of immortality, though manifestly the evidence is of a character to convince none but the party immediately interested. A man may speak to me of the internal witness which he has of being God's child : I do not question that there may be such a witness ; but manifestly it is a witness of which I can form no judgment ; it is necessarily confined to the party who affirms its possession, and can in no degree work conviction in a stranger. We desire, therefore, to avoid most carefully the appearance of resolving into enthusiasm all pretensions to a secret and indescribable testimony. We charge no man with speaking the words which are not "of truth and soberness," because we find him dwelling on heavenly communications with which he is privileged, and appealing to discoveries which God is pleased to make of himself in the depths and solitudes of his own heart. God forbid that we should in the least degree limit the operations of the Spirit. God forbid that we should throw the slightest shadow of suspicion on those joys of the righteous with which no stranger intermeddeth, as though to question that they furnish any evidence of the man's being a true believer. But we may lawfully declare, that this secret testimony, this witness which can satisfy none but the individual in whose breast it is planted, may very easily be counterfeited, and is not to be trusted when it stands alone. And the question now is, whether it be of an evidence such as this that St. Paul speaks in our text. The question is, whether that testimony of the Holy Ghost to which the apostle refers be a secret, and silent, and intangible thing, coming in the

form of a rapture or an ecstasy, and calculated to convince none but the individual by whom it is felt. The question is, whether a man who has no external and visible proof to which he can appeal, may justly shield himself beneath our text, as proving that the necessary testimony may be all given within; and whether, on the other hand, a man, whose life is a witness to his piety, must suppose himself void of the Spirit's attestation, if he be not favoured with a spiritual and animating sense of forgiveness.

It is manifestly of the greatest importance, that we find the right answer to these questions. We doubt whether, in the whole range of theological inquiry, there be a point on which a sound decision is more necessary, and perhaps more difficult, than this of the witness to a man's spirit of his being God's child. We speak of the *difficulty*, as well as the *necessity*; for you must have gathered from our foregoing remarks, that there are two opposite dangers in handling this topic; the one of encouraging sentiments which may often spring from enthusiasm; the other of limiting the operations of the Holy Ghost, and making the believer suspicious of his choicest enjoyments. We shall endeavour to make our way between these opposite difficulties; though we frankly own that of the two we should be less careful to avoid the latter than the former. It were far safer for men to be kept in doubt and anxiety when there is full ground for comfort, than to be confident on insufficient reasons. We would far rather for all of you that you would fail to hear the testimony of the Spirit when actually given, than imagine it when it did not exist: you might indeed have more comfort, but evidently you would have much less security, on the second supposition than the first. And therefore, however anxious we are *that* you have all those comforts which spring from a well-grounded foundation, we are even yet more anxious, that none of you should deceive yourselves, speaking peace to the soul when there is no peace. We wish that those within whose breasts the Spirit is witnessing that witness of which St. Paul speaks, may be led to the full assurance of salvation; but we wish with greater intenseness, that those who may be resolving the Spirit's testimony into something secret, and mystical, and indefinite—an impulse, a whisper, a communication, of which they can give no account, and furnish no evidence; we wish that these may be taught to put away the wild and unwarranted opinion, and to feel that, with regard to the witness of the Holy Ghost, as the very ground-work of assurance, they should be ready, according to St. Peter's admonition, "to

give to every man that asketh them, a reason of the hope that is in them."

You will understand, from these remarks, that we consider, and wish to prove, the witness of the Spirit, which is spoken of in our text, an intelligible, manifest, determinable thing, far removed from what is mysterious, or strange, or unaccountable. You will perceive, that, in place of regarding the witness as that of which the very party to whom it is directed can furnish no account, and of which he can assert that he feels it and cherishes it in the solitudes of his heart, we consider it as capable of being manifested to others, and established upon principles which all around must admit. Of course, we do not pretend to have yet advanced any thing which makes good this opinion; we simply state that this is the opinion which we wish to uphold, because we reckon, that any other gives encouragement to views which are practically pernicious. We must hence examine the text with accurate attention, and thus endeavour to elicit its real import.

It seems to us, that St. Paul distinctly asserts that the witness of the Spirit is no secret or inexplicable thing, and then leaves us to infer from such assertion its true nature and character. These, at least the assertion and the inference, we design to bring successively to your notice; and you will judge in the sequel, whether the passage has been fairly handled and examined.

In the first place, then, we are to show you an assertion in our text, as to what the witness of the Spirit is not; we are, in the second place, to draw from this an inference as to what this witness of the Spirit is.

Now we speak of the text, as containing AN ASSERTION AS TO WHAT THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT IS NOT, because it is of a *joint* testimony, and not of a *solitary*, that the Apostle makes mention: "The Spirit itself beareth witness *with* our spirit." The Spirit testifying is a fellow-witness with our spirit: such is the import of the expression. So that the testimony is that of *two* witnesses combining together to give evidence, and not that of a single party furnishing a single affirmation. Had St. Paul said, "The Spirit itself beareth witness *to* our spirit," the passage would have assumed a widely different character; there would have been but a single witness, namely, the divine Spirit; and the human would have been only the recipient of the testimony. And had this been the statement, we could scarcely have rescued the text from the grasp of the enthusiast. He might have told us that the Apostle spoke of a

witness given by the Spirit of God *to* the spirit of man—a witness, therefore, which, by its very nature, must be secret and inexplicable; and he might then have gone on to reason upon special manifestations and secret intimations, and have rested all his hope for immortality on evidence which sprang only from a fervid imagination. But we cannot allow that the text, in its present form, may be brought to support such opinions. We contend, that, by speaking of the concurrent testimony of two witnesses—and those two the divine Spirit and our own—St. Paul removes the testimony itself from all that enthusiasm can dictate, and brings it under the jurisdiction of sound reason and sober inquiry.

We are not yet endeavouring to show what this testimony is; we are only examining, on the Apostle's authority, what it is not, that we may confute error, before we set ourselves to the establishing truth. And we say, that if our own spirit is a fellow-witness with God's Spirit to our having received the adoption of sons, then the testimony itself must be a testimony on which we can sit in judgment, and of which we can give account: not a supernatural voice, for our spirit could have nothing to do with such a voice; not a mysterious impression produced we know not how, for our spirit could have no part in working such impression. It may be (and this we wish well observed) that there will be much in the testimony, as proceeding from God's Spirit, which is not to be explained and not comprehended; but if it proceed at the same time from our own spirit, there must also be much which we may demonstrate and vindicate. There cannot be joint witnesses, there cannot be concurrent testimony, unless each witness be able to explain his own part of the testimony, however unable he may be to explain that of the other. The evidence may be a mystery to the one witness, so far as it is furnished by his fellow-witness, but it must be quite clear and intelligible, so far as it is furnished by himself. For example: I might receive a strong impression through a dream; a supernatural communication might seem made to me in a vision of the night; and I might awake with a deep and comforting persuasion that God had pardoned all my sins, and would admit me at death into the light of his presence. We are far enough from saying, that the impression thus derived from a dream must be necessarily deceitful, and that God would never take such a mode of ministering to a man's spiritual comfort. But could the testimony thus afforded me—allowing it to be all that it seems to be—could it be regarded as that of which St. Paul speaks in our text? If I have been staggered by the text because I could

not find a similar witness to my adoption, should I be warranted in thinking that the wanting evidence was supplied by the vision, and that I might now therefore be satisfied that I was indeed a child of God? We cannot admit this. The vision might be the witness of God's Spirit *to* my spirit; it certainly could not be the witness of God's Spirit "*with* my spirit." Undoubtedly my spirit bears no witness in this matter; it *yields* no witness, however much it may *receive*. If the testimony lie in the dream, it is manifest that my spirit is, in one sense, the author of the dream, and therefore in no sense the author of the testimony. So that, whatever the vividness of my waking feelings, and however permanent my impression of the adoption, I should have no right to refer to what had passed, as proving, in my own case, the truth that, "the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."

And, of course, what we thus affirm, in regard to a dream, may be affirmed equally in regard to any of those secret suggestions, those sudden emotions, those inspired feelings, with which many would identify the testimony of the Spirit. We ask an individual, on what he bases his assurance that he shall enter heaven when he dies. He tells us of a sweet sense which he enjoys of pardon and favour; he tells of the privileges of the elect—that they cannot perish, neither fail of happiness at last; he tells of foretastes vouchsafed to him of future blessedness, and of pledges of immortality. And he may speak quite truly; he may have a sweet sense of pardon, and a thorough belief in the doctrine of election, and anticipate the good in store for the faithful: we neither deny nor depreciate the tokens of adoption, which he thus reckons up. But he has brought forward nothing, which we can receive as the witness of the text: he has brought forward nothing of which we can show that his own spirit and God's Spirit conspire to its production. The persuasion that he is one of the elect—however commonly appealed to when we challenge a man as to his ground of assurance—is a persuasion, which, if it stand by itself, is far enough from answering to the description of the testimony of the text. That persuasion may have been wrought into the human spirit by the power of the divine; but certainly it is no proof which the divine Spirit and the human *concur* in presenting. So that, without charging with deceitfulness other kinds of evidence, and without resolving into enthusiasm the sensations and persuasions from which the man may derive much of his comfort, we have a right to ask from every one who thinks himself God's child, some witness which may be subjected to

a rigid examination. We say, some witness which may be subjected to a rigid examination; for any which eludes the grasp of inquiry, which is too delicate to be handled, too ethereal to be reasoned upon, too private to be exposed to the observation of others, cannot be the joint witnessing of God's Spirit and man's. Man's part in such witness—whatever may be said of God's—must, as we before explained, be capable of being manifested, and brought within rules applied ordinarily to testimony. And unless, therefore, an individual can give us a rational account of the grounds of his assurance—an account, that is, which may be submitted to reason, and vindicated by reason, O he may dwell with much apparent delight, on his inward sense of acceptance, on his conviction that he is predestined to life, and on the rapturous feelings which he often enjoys, but we are bound to tell him that he has not yet furnished the scriptural evidence of adoption, for he has not made good his right to class himself with those who are privileged to say, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."

Now we have thus shown, that the witness noticed in our text, forasmuch as it results from our own spirit as well as the divine, cannot be of that kind which Scripture asserts to be genuine, and may be imagined by the enthusiast, or counterfeited by the hypocrite. We have found an assertion in our text, as to what the witness is not; we are now to draw AN INFERENCE, AS TO WHAT THE WITNESS IS. And this is comparatively easy; for, having excluded all testimony in which the human spirit does not concur with the divine, we are to confine ourselves to one kind of evidence by which this testimony can be confirmed and made manifest. The question is simply, in what way the Spirit can bear witness with our spirit, that we have entered into the family of heaven; what testimony there can be of adoption, in producing which the divine Spirit and the human can be proved to co-operate. We have no hesitation as to the answer to be given to this question. We believe our text to be in exact harmony with those many passages of Scripture, which represent holiness as the alone proof of justification. You cannot require us to refer to well-known passages of the Bible which insist on the fruitlessness of the faith that does not influence the life, and which forbid a man to suppose himself safe for eternity except on strict evidence of his being a new creature. There is no truth more prominently set forth by the inspired writers, none which is more woven into the very heart of the Christian system, than that there must be renewal of nature, a thorough moral change, in every one who gains entrance

into the kingdom of heaven. There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth; and the alone individual who has warrant for reckoning himself pardoned and accepted through Christ, is the individual who can trace such a revolution in the whole inner man, as demonstrates him born again of an incorruptible seed. And what we now contend for is, that there is no variation between the representations thus given of the evidence which proves a man a believer in Christ, and that furnished by the words which form our subject of discourse. We contend, that the individual who may not be able to make good his title to immortality on the witness of an altered life and in increasing sanctification, has no right to shield himself, on the authority of our text, under another kind of witness, and that a secret and mysterious one. If he cannot bear the test which other scriptures furnish, he must not appeal to what St. Paul says of the witness of the Spirit, as if there were afforded a different criterion. We contend that the criterion is altogether the same, and that it is through the fruits, produced by the operation of the Holy Ghost, that the Spirit witnesses with our spirit that we are the children of God.

Let us consider, for a moment, what a converted man, who sits in judgment on himself and his condition, may observe with regard to the influences of the Spirit; and we shall have little difficulty in discovering that concurrent testimony spoken of by the Apostle. This man may perceive, that, whereas, he was born with the love of sin, there has passed on him such a change that he desires nothing more than being conformed to the image of Christ, who was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." Whatever the failures in obedience which he has to lament, the relapses into practices which he had professed to forsake, the inconsiderable progress in heavenly things which he makes, he can yet determine that he is not what he was, and that his affections have found a new home, a new centre. If he be a converted man, it is not possible that there be no signs of conversion on which he may fasten. The signs may indeed be occasionally obscured, and one cause or another may produce fear and suspicion; but he cannot have been converted, without having been transferred from the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of Christ; and where this transfer has been effected, there must be a change in disposition which will be manifested by a change in deportment; and the man, if not quite overborne by melancholy and distrust, may gather proofs enough from the bent of his will and the object of his labours, that he has been the subject of a great spiritual renovation. And thus, as he prosecutes inquiry into his

state before God, there is presented to him much of broad and tangible material, out of which he may form a decision. He does not love sin, and he does not commit sin, as he once loved it and once committed it. He is no longer its slave; though there are yet times when it struggles for mastery. He finds that he prefers the future to the present; so that, though not so detached as he would be from the earthly and the perishing, he nevertheless can honestly declare, that his heart is in heaven, where is also his treasure. He perceives in himself a growing sensitiveness to evil, a strengthening perception of what is hateful in God's sight: so that he is continually inclined to draw back the boundary line between the lawful and the unlawful, and to reckon as forbidden more and more what he had reckoned indifferent. He can find in his heart an increasing solicitude for the well-being of others; a solicitude, which, while it overlooks not their temporal interests, is mainly turned on their eternal; the love of Christ constraining him produces a desire which may be apparent to an individual that a world lying in wickedness may be roused to repentance and faith. He can trace indications that there are produced in him those graces which St. Paul gives as "the fruits of the Spirit," "love, joy, peace; long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."

And we do affirm, that whensoever a man can find these fruits in himself, the Spirit may be said to "bear witness with his spirit" that he is one of God's children. It is the Holy Spirit who possesses the fruits, and thus furnishes the material, out of which a decision must be made; and then his own spirit sits in judgment on those fruits, examining them by scriptural tests, and determining whether they constitute a proof of that renewal of nature, which is indispensable to salvation. The Holy Spirit has wrought an alteration in the man; and then his own spirit searches out this alteration, compares it with all the Bible says of the second birth, weighs it and measures it, to see whether it comes up to the divine standard; so that the alteration, though wrought, is no evidence to the man, until he have made it matter of diligent inquiry, subjected it to the searching and sifting processes which are used by those who would separate the true from the false. And when his own spirit has decided on the genuineness of the tokens submitted to its scrutiny, and determined that the evidences presented are those prescribed by the Bible, then may it emphatically be declared, that "the Spirit itself beareth witness with his spirit" to his adoption. It is the Holy Spirit which has furnished the material of proof, for through that Spirit

has he been renewed, and enabled to bring forth the fruits of godly living; and then it is his own spirit which has sat in judgment on that material of proof, examining it by the scriptural criterion, and weighing it in the scriptural balances. When, therefore, a decision is made, that there is ground for believing himself no longer a stranger, but a fellow-citizen with the saints and with the household of God, is it not undeniable, that the divine Spirit and the human have concurred, to give the witness of adoption? Without the workings of God's Spirit, there could have been no material of proof; and without the workings of man's spirit, there could have been no employment of that material: and what then shall we say of this witness, but that it is the testimony of one Spirit witnessing with the other? It were of all things the easiest to work you up an impassioned description, and to give you a glowing account of enjoyments vouchsafed to the faithful in Christ, when, in moments of special communing with God, they seem to escape the present contracted scene, and already to take their place with the myriads around the throne; and we feel, that we should be exhibiting religion under an aspect of far richer beauty and far greater fascination, if we gave you this magnificent anticipation of heaven as the testimony furnished by the Spirit to the believer, than when we tie you down to a rigid and even painful calculation, and require you to gather from the study of the Bible and strict comparison of your lives with its statements, your evidence of adoption into the family of God. So general and so strong is the disposition to erect frames and feelings into witnesses of our spiritual condition, and so prone are the best to seek comfort in their experience, that we know that we should carry many with us, as eager and delighted auditors, if we applied our text to enraptured emotions and excited sensibilities. And you may be inclined to charge us with advocating a cold and over-prudent theology; but we count it matter for the very heartiest thanksgiving, that the scriptural tests of our condition require of us calculation, and are not to be resolved into feelings. For nothing are we more grateful than for the fact that the evidences of justification are not made to fall within the province of imagination. We see nothing which could follow, but the throwing open, as we before said, the door to all kinds of delusion, if it were once established that our state before God must be judged by a secret consciousness, a mysterious impression, an incommunicable sense of election unto life: we should have the sanguine and enthusiastic confident when they ought to tremble, the humble and timid alarmed

in the midst of security. And, therefore, however pleasing it might be to any of you to hear our text applied to a hidden and choice intercourse between God and the soul, and however they may have been accustomed to expound it of some whispered testimony falling on the mind's ear in beautiful melody, when the world is all shut out, and heaven breaks upon the gaze, we rejoice that the grammar of the words, and the plain meaning of the words, are quite against the high-wrought explanation of the expression, and that, when fairly interpreted, it gives as little play to the fancy, and as little room to the enthusiasm, as any of those expressions which treat of evidence, or the declaration, that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." We fasten you down to the fact, that the alleged testimony is that of two witnesses combining to give evidence: we exclude, therefore, all testimony which is not the joint testimony of the divine Spirit and the human. And when we are asked, where that joint testimony is to be found, we turn at once to the life of the renewed man, marked as that is with the tracings of the Spirit of God: and we require the man to bring all those graces to the bar of his own spirit. What the divine Spirit has wrought must be submitted to the inquiries of the human, that there may be a decision on scriptural ground as to the reality of the conversion; and if what God's Spirit hath effected, man's spirit can prove accordant to the inspired accounts of the results of justification, then, indeed, there is a witness to the being a member of God's family, which the two spirits concur in producing. And not more certain could the individual be of his adoption, if favoured with an immediate revelation, than when, after careful examination of the tokens of a renewed nature which are furnished by his conduct, he finds cause to class himself with those who can say, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."

But we are willing to allow, and we wish to explain before we conclude, that "the Spirit beareth witness with our spirit," in a yet more direct and intimate manner than has been hitherto indicated. It is not only the province of the Spirit to produce in us the fruits of righteousness, but so to enlighten our understandings, that they may discern the fruits when produced. We account for much of that anxiety and disquietude which we observe and deplore amongst believers in Christ, on the principle that they do not sufficiently look at the Spirit to enable them to discover his own work in their souls. The case is far from uncommon, of men who can but dimly, if at all, perceive in themselves the tokens of conversion and renewal, whilst

to all around they are too plain to be overlooked: the man remains in painful doubt of his spiritual state, though others, who watch earnestly his conduct, find proofs in abundance that he is on the way to heaven. Thus many go mourning all their days, never venturing to feel confident of their adoption, whilst their ministers or their friends see cause for most thorough assurance that God has gathered them into the membership of his invisible church. And one great reason of this appears to us to be, that men do not observe that the evidence of their condition is to be partly furnished by their own understandings, and that it is one office of the Holy Ghost to assist their understandings in performing this duty. They do not see that their own spirits are not to be inactive, but must diligently concur with God's Spirit in framing the testimony that is essential to their comfort; and they do not therefore apply to God's Spirit that their own may be aided to do its part in the witnessing work. Herein however is one great way in which the Spirit of God bears witness with our spirits, and we must bring it into the account, if we would truly explain St. Paul's statement in our text. When a man would sit in judgment on himself, wishing to ascertain his spiritual condition, he has to bring before him his own motives and his own actions, and infer from these the genuineness of his faith; and this is a work in which he is just as likely to err on one side as on the other, in not allowing the motives and the actions to be as pure and upright as they really are, as in ascribing to them what they do not really possess. The very fears may lead to his so depreciating all his motives, and all his actions, that they shall not seem to him, whilst they actually are, suggested by God's Spirit, and performed through his assistance. It is a great error, to think that the danger of forming a wrong judgment on our state is wholly on the side of supposing ourselves children whilst yet aliens; there is to the full as much risk, though the consequences are not equally dangerous, of our reckoning ourselves aliens, whilst yet children. In the one case the understanding may have misrepresented the evidence of the life; or it may have substituted imaginary and fugitive evidence for that which is real and apparent: whilst in the other, it may have overlooked the evidences of the life, or not allowed them their due weight, or not traced them to their right origin. But if the aids of God's Spirit were simply relied on, when the believer in Christ is inquiring into the evidence of his adoption, there would not, we are persuaded, be the thousandth part of that doubt or distrust, by which numbers are harassed all their days. The Holy Spirit would

shine on his own work, as its character was narrowly examined ; and cause it to manifest more clearly its nature and authorship. The Spirit would put into more vigorous exercise the affections it had renewed, making them increasingly influential on the conduct, and thus putting more and more out of doubt their having been subject to his operation. The Spirit would give a greater power to the understanding of distinguishing the natural from the supernatural ; and thus strengthen it to recognise a divine work, where it would have discovered nothing but the human. We pretend not to offer any explanation, as to the manner in which the Spirit may accomplish all this. Mysterious as well as mighty in his every operation—coming and going as the wind, of which we know not whence it proceedeth nor whither it departeth—rapid and piercing as the arrow, and yet, like the arrow, leaving no trace of the path which it cleft—we desire not indeed to scrutinize the work of the Holy Ghost, nor to explain it, except by its effects. But we are sure, that all who depend on the Spirit to assist them in judging themselves, will admit the truth of our statement, that the divine Spirit enables the human to form a just estimate of motive and of action, to discriminate between what is born with us, and what is obtained from above, and to trace the course of those regenerating processes through which are quickened the “dead in trespasses and sins:” and what is this, if it be not “the Spirit itself bearing witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God?”

If it be the divine Spirit, which not only enables us to produce the fruits which are the fruits of faith, but which further enables us to perceive those fruits when produced, and to discover in them the evidences of conversion, beyond all doubt it is through the joint workings of God’s Spirit and our own, that we obtain a testimony to our adoption ; and the testimony when obtained proceeds from the two witnesses concurring in one affirmation. It is a testimony which is not borne *without* our own conscience, and much less borne *against* our own conscience, but which binds that conscience, yea, rather, coincides with it, and is so powerful that only its voice is heard. And here it is that the witness of the Spirit, whilst never to be confounded with those unaccountable and indescribable attestations which have been substituted for it by the credulous and the fanciful, may be as glittering and gladdening a thing as was ever imagined by those most anxious for the fullest assurance. If the Spirit bears witness with our spirit, by enabling us to form a right estimate of our condition, enlightening the mind so that it discovers the great change in

itself, warming the affections, and quickening the graces, till the fervour and the life are undeniably not of this earth, why we have a ground-work of confidence, which would be poorly exchanged for the warmest that enthusiasm ever delineated. I ask no trance, no vision, no lofty rapture, no message by angelic lips, if the Spirit itself be thus a fellow-witness with my spirit, so that, sitting in assize upon myself, I find my understanding and my conscience deciding, by scripture tests, that I have passed from death unto life. You tell me, that, after all, my decision may be false. I know it; I know that I may be throwing away my soul, and all the while supposing myself grasping immortality. But I am incalculably less likely, when the witness is to be gathered from the life, my spirit depending upon God's for ability, to be deceived, than if the testimony come from a frame which fancy may counterfeit, if it address itself purely to high-wrought sensibilities, and be incommunicable to all but myself. And if I am not deceived, would I barter the assurance, derived from the joint witness in question, for any which might flow from a solemn voice heard by me in the midnight, or a vivid impression traced, I know not how, on the tablets of the inner man? I can examine my assurance again and again; I can repeat the process by which it has been reached. The voice has died away, and I cannot waken its echoes; the impression has faded, and I cannot revive its characters: but the Spirit witnessing with my spirit—I can have this *always* with me: the testimony may be recompounded as often as it is needed: I carry about with me the tribunal and the evidence; and if tempted to doubt, may reconstruct the ground-work of witness.

Where then is the witness which is comparable in its permanence to this? And if not comparable in its permanence, how can it be comparable in its power of administering comfort? A Christian's comfort must lie mainly in the sense that he is safe for eternity; and what can communicate, what can preserve this sense, like a standing witness that he walks the path-way of life? O! we know, as we before said, that believers in Christ have often seasons of unutterable gladness, a tide of joy setting in upon the soul, and glorious earnestness of the portion being imparted to cheer them in their remaining warfare. Nevertheless, it is not from such seasons that they obtain their clearest proofs of adoption into God's family; they cannot be always on the mount of transfiguration; and the memory of enjoyment is but a weak support, when principalities and powers are labouring to undermine their peace. But O! if when doubts arise, they can examine motives and actions by the rules of God's

word, and the light of God's grace, and prove them, in spite of much to be corrected, and much to be deplored, demonstrative of renewal of nature, this indeed is to bear about with them materials from which they may always construct a reason for the hope that is in them ; this is to have their title for immortality written and graven, so that it may be inspected and authenticated ; and this it is to have the Spirit itself bearing witness with their spirit, that they are the children of God.

What remains, then, but that we exhort you all to diligence, in examining whether you be indeed in the faith ? We do not send you to seek your proof in any field of speculation ; we direct you to a testimony, in regard of which it is not easy to be deceived, which cannot well be imagined where it does not exist, nor overlooked where it does. We contend, that every one of you may ascertain for himself whether he be a new creature. If we gave you no test but one of feeling, if we required you to decide by secret tokens, and suggestions, and impulses, we should be turning you adrift on a sea of uncertainty, and it would be nothing strange if you remained in doubt, and wandered into error. But when we send you to your own lives, when we bid you judge of change of heart by a change of conduct, when we require you to determine whether you are altered men, by comparing yourselves now and in former days—in your families—in your commerce—in your amusements ; never let it be said, that it is hard to find the proof. There is a real and palpable difference between the converted and the unconverted ; and you cannot espouse a greater error, than when you think the new creation may be scarcely, if at all, distinguishable from the old. I know that the change may be made by almost imperceptible steps, so that the man may be gradually converted ; but I know, also, that when completed, the change is nothing short of gigantic—a child of wrath to a child of God—an heir of death to an heir of immortality. O ! let it not be supposed, that a transition, which thought cannot measure, will leave a man just where he was, so that he may be at a loss for evidence that he has entered a new state. The witness of God's Spirit with your own spirits—search ye for this. It is trumpet-tongued : its blasts are in the haunts of trade, and the privacies of retirement. It gives itself sound amid all the occupations, amid all the recreations of life. If you are really God's servants, you are God's servants every where, and in all things. If not every where, and in all things, we are bound to tell you, that you can be God's servants no where, and in nothing.

GOD HONOURING THE RIGHTEOUS.

REV. T. MYERS, A.M.

ST. JAMES'S CHURCH, CLERKENWELL, NOVEMBER 27, 1836*.

“Them that honour me, I will honour.”—1 SAMUEL, ii. 30.

THE perusal of the memoirs of some remarkable servant of God, is oftentimes the best excitement to growth in grace. We bend eagerly over the page which records the sayings and doings of men pre-eminent in godliness: we sympathize in their struggles with sinfulness within, and with opposition from without: we rejoice with three-fold joy when the bright rays of peace beam in upon their souls, and the mighty shield of faith is thrown around their path. We sigh when the warrior is caught sleeping at his post, and parleying with the foe; when his foot all but slips, and the tempter is all but successful. We have hope for him when the eye is again fixed steadfastly on “the prize of his calling,” and the hand again grasps firmly “the sword of the Spirit.” We weep when humility is forgotten, and pride becomes rampant, and zeal becomes tintured with bitterness.

In the various trials and successes, the weaknesses and victories, of the good man, as he journeys homewards, we view the remains of what man is by nature, and the germ of what he will become by grace. Hence the biography of the saints is a mirror wherein each believer sees a reflection of *self*. This mirror is not, indeed, as perfect as that of the life of our risen Master; which, when dimmed by the breath of our corruption, reflects the hidden deformity of our hearts. But still we may be startled and edified by the accuracy with which it defines to us our true character. Of all knowledge, *self-knowledge* is the hardest to attain unto; and when the life of a mortal of the same passions and responsibilities is opened out to us, we are conscious that the same wants are ours, and that the same grace may be ours. What he did for God, we

* A Funeral Sermon for the REV. CHARLES SIMEON, A.M., of Cambridge.

may do ; what he suffered, we must suffer ; where he failed, we may triumph ; where he stood firm, we may stumble. We have one common foe, one common hope, “ one Lord, one faith, one baptism.”

Who kindles not with heavenly zeal when he muses over the singular boldness of Micaiah, of Elijah, of Daniel, of Nehemiah ? Who fears not for himself when remembering Judas the traitor, Peter the coward, Demas the lover of this present world ? Should we all have despised the riches of Egypt like Moses, or have endured the heavy strokes of affliction like Job ? or should we have been overcome of lust with David, of vanity with Hezekiah, or of the fear of man with Pilate ? Where is the Christian of modern days who can trace the career of the Apostle of the Gentiles, from his first introduction as Saul of Tarsus, till he becomes Paul the aged (the good fight being fought, and the true faith being kept), and not be edified by the matchless example ?

If we turn to the experience of the saints who have lived in uninspired times, we may benefit much by tracing the progress of their spiritual existence from its morning to its evening. The church of God hath in all ages furnished many instances of the triumph of grace over natural corruption, of humility succeeding to pride, of self-abasement substituted for self-sufficiency, and of miracles of grace wrought only by the all-controlling power of the indwelling Spirit of God. There are names laid up in the chronicles of the Christian faith which are the common property of all churches and of all ages. Luther, Calvin, Melancthon, Cranmer, Latimer, Ridley, lived for all times, the example for all the righteous. Each of them stood forth amid a perverse and idolatrous generation ; they honoured God, and God did mightily honour them.

And in our own day, we, whose years have scarcely exceeded a quarter of a century, have seen some illustrious instances of devotion to God. The call that has re-echoed through the land for missionary efforts, has roused many from the routine of every-day piety ; it hath urged them to deeds of noble daring for Jehovah. Buchanan, Carey, Martyn, Thomason, counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of God. They saw the fields of heathenism lying white for the harvest ; and though the labourers were few, and the burden of the day oppressive, they were “ men who hazarded their lives for the name of the Lord Jesus.”

Within the last few days, another of the venerable fathers in our own Israel has been taken to his rest. His sacred name will live long

in the remembrance of Britain, of India, of America. I refer not to any man of renown for martial prowess and for successful generalship ; I refer not to any statesman who has supported the majesty of the throne, and the sanctity of the altar, and made both lovely in the eyes of a happy population. I refer to a servant of God, whose praise is in all the churches ; in his own estimation the chief of sinners, in ours a striking instance of the truth of our text : “ Them that honour me, I will honour.” I have lately been called upon to weep over the grave of the REV. CHARLES SIMEON, for fifty-three years minister of the same church, and fellow of the same college, in Cambridge. When a student I was honoured with his fatherly kindness ; and as there are many circumstances in his life which, when narrated to the congregations of our Zion, may stir up souls to increased diligence and faithfulness, by the permission of your minister I shall detain you this evening with such particulars as may prove most instructing.

It concerns me not to tell you of his earthly parentage ; though it is interesting to know when it was first manifest that he was “ born of God.” The historian of this world records the birth-place of statesmen and warriors ; but “ of Zion it shall be said, this and that man was born in her. The Lord shall count, when he writeth up his people, that this man was born there.”

His first convictions of sin took place when at Eton College, before the age of nineteen. He had then very strong feelings of the sinfulness of his heart, and hearty desires for pardon and forgiveness. But these impressions were not permanent ; he had not yet obtained strength to cast off the old man, with his affections and lusts, and to put on the new man “ created after God in righteousness and true holiness.” He fell again into the ordinary sins of youth ; and though his conduct was not what the world calls gross and disgraceful, yet he afterwards lamented his fall, as rendering him especially deserving of the wrath of God. After being resident some time at Cambridge, the feelings of remorse and of bitterness were awakened by the usual invitation to attend the sacrament at his college chapel. He was for some time in much agony : God spake to him through his conscience ; he felt deeply its inward stings ; he cried, and prayed, and interceded for pardon and peace with many tears ; and at length, on Easter Sunday, before he went forth to join in the sacramental service, God gave him that peace, of which he never afterwards deprived him. Henceforth he felt himself a child of God ; he was fed with the milk of the word ; the light of divine

truth beamed in upon his mind, and all was a calm, and settled, and growing peace with God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The time at length came for his taking holy orders, when he had attained the age of three and twenty, about fifty-four years ago. His first curacy was a very small parish in Cambridge, which he held for nearly a year; for he was appointed by the then Bishop of Ely perpetual curate of Trinity Church, Cambridge. the church in which he ministered till summoned to his everlasting home.

Now, the view which we are about to take of his character will be already suggested to you by the words of our text. I wish to shew you how he honoured God, and how, according to his own promise, God honoured him; but that I may not confine your attention too closely to one individual, I would treat the subject first, *generally*, and then illustrate it by *this striking example*.

Our two heads will be as follow: first, how the righteous should honour God; secondly, how God will honour the righteous.

THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHOULD HONOUR GOD, *by putting his trust implicitly in God's words of promise*. The first duty of the regenerated soul is to receive the kingdom of heaven as a little child: with all simplicity and meekness, and seeking God as a father; taking his word as if spoken to one's-self, searching it diligently for hidden treasure; and resigning one's-self, body, soul, and spirit, to the leadings of the Spirit of God. To deny self, to become humble, teachable, and pliable, under the hand of God, are all impossible to flesh and blood; they need daily and hourly watchfulness and prayer, and by cultivating such a spirit of patient waiting for Christ, the righteous man commences his course by honouring God.

Thus it was with the departed. As soon as he was admitted into fellowship with the Father of spirits, through his Son, Jesus Christ, he honoured God by self-abasement in prayer, by lying lowly in the dust, by crying for mercy as a lost sinner, and by pleading only the merits and righteousness of the adorable Saviour. There never was a man of modern times who spent more of his time in earnest, agonizing prayer. He rose early in the morning to be alone with God; and, like David, he frequently watered his couch with tears. Thus he honoured God by private devotion and by personal holiness; by curbing angry passions and unholy desires; and having gained the victory over self, he went forth to battle, as a giant refreshed; and won over many from the thousands of Satan's host

by the holiness of his example, and by the consistency of his conversation.

Secondly, the righteous man honours God *by cleaving fast unto the Lord when the world is all against him*. It is easy to come forward as a champion for the faith, when the multitude are flocking to our standard. When the fashion of the neighbourhood in which we live encourages a display of piety and good works, when the tide of obtrusive profession sets in towards the landmark of formal profession, then it costs scarcely a pang to walk worthy of our high calling. But when the world is all against us, when friends and foes combine to ridicule, to injure, and to crush us, then is it a hard matter to fear not them which can kill the body; then is it a hard matter to resist the persuasiveness of friends, and the virulence of opponents. When you have no earthly friend with whom you can hold counsel, none who can appreciate your motives or sympathize in the anxieties of your soul, then will you feel the awfulness of that solitude which consists in being alone with Jehovah.

In the present state of the Christian church, such a position is extremely rare: but this was exactly Mr. Simeon's case at the commencement of his ministry. For many a weary year he preached the Gospel of humiliation and repentance, without being conscious that a single hearer was benefited by his declarations of God's everlasting love. He knew of no clerical brother of similar views; he was all alone in his personal experience, and in his parochial ministrations. The singularity of his course at length commanded attention. All in authority combined to put him down. The University practically excommunicated him: they jeered, and scoffed, and blasphemed, for a long course of years. His parishioners joined in the same persecution. The churchwardens locked his church-door during the hours of service: when he forced it open, they crowded it with the boisterous multitude. The whole force of the civil power was necessary to conduct him in safety from his rooms to his church, and from his vestry to his pulpit. His hearers were pointed at with the finger of scorn, and the very sound of his bell for evening service was the signal for riot and confusion through the town and the University. At length men grew tired of insulting a man who was strong and courageous in his master's strength. When the excitement ceased, the still small voice of the Spirit was heard. After years of toil, one solitary stranger accosted him, and asked counsel concerning his soul. By this he was so affected that he burst into tears, and thanked God as for some magnificent mercy. A few of his

brethren were then discovered as holding sentiments like his own. Romaine, Berridge, Cecil, and the elder Venn, were his earliest friends. As time passed on, opposition was less open, trials were somewhat modified, usefulness was gradually extending, and the word of the Lord was respected where it was not received, and religion honoured when it might not be adopted and professed. He, however, was not a man to be moved from the Rock of his hopes, by either the frown or the smile of his fellows. That chilliness and deadness which had prevailed so long in the Church of England, began to be succeeded by the warmth and vitality of evangelical truth. The bread of life cast so often and so perseveringly on the waters, was found after many days; many instruments for good were raised up: the friends of the Gospel were multiplied, and spake often one to another, and were edified.

Another way in which the righteous man honours God is, *by his ceaseless activity and enlarged benevolence.*

Thus it should be with all: not slothful in business, but serving the Lord. The Christian has no time to fritter away in trifles. His concern is with the souls of men; and souls may be lost while he is loitering.

This man of God whose character we are considering, was a man of ceaseless activity. He had three full services in his church, as well as one on Thursday evening, and usually preached himself every Sunday morning and evening. The composition of his sermons, and his instructions to young men who were afterwards to become the ministers of the church, occupied his ceaseless attention. He was unremitting in his efforts to point out the best method of preaching the truth. As his influence increased so his benevolence extended. He was of a most catholic spirit—friendly to all who loved the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. He was either the founder or an original director of all the great societies which are now an ornament to our nation. He gave proofs of attachment to them more than ordinary. He received 5000*l.* for the copyright of his works: this he instantly distributed as follows: 1000*l.* to the Clerical Education Society; 1000*l.* to the Church Missionary Society; and 1000*l.* to the Jews' Society: this last he especially loved, and for this it delighted him to preach. The remainder he laid out in acquiring the patronage of ecclesiastical benefices.

But I wish you to observe further, *his singleness of eye, and his faithfulness unto death.*

Early in life he seems to have marked out his peculiar course.

He took one line, and he kept it. Though often tempted to leave Cambridge on most advantageous offers; though livings of large value were continually falling vacant, to which his position in his college gave him a legal right, yet he allowed them all to pass; in this he never faltered for one moment. Although he had the opportunity of enjoying a large legacy from a relative, he accepted but a small part of it, and this he laid out in his most favourite method of doing good, namely, that of purchasing livings, for the purpose of appointing godly and active pastors, who should herald unto perishing sinners the only way of salvation. For this purpose he saved as much of his yearly income as possible; and, as his influence extended and others contributed to the fund, his livings, of which the patronage is vested in trustees, are very numerous. These he selected with the utmost care, and bound them by most solemn promise to allow neither party favour nor private friendship to sway them, when called upon to select the future pastors of the flock.

Our attention must now be turned to the second part of our subject, namely, **HOW GOD HONOURS THE RIGHTEOUS**. Now, first of all, God honours his saints who commit their souls to his keeping for pardon and reconciliation, by *bestowing that peace which passes all understanding*. Having chosen them by his grace first, he sustains them by his power afterwards. When once they are enabled to sue earnestly for the pardon of sin, and for an interest in the soul-saving righteousness of the Redeemer, then does God manifest himself unto them as he does not unto the world; he gives them the full assurance of faith; he supports them with his everlasting arm; he holds communion with them through his indwelling Spirit; and, finally, preserves them steadfast and victorious unto the end.

This was remarkably evident in the Christian experience of the departed. From that Easter Sunday of which I spake, he enjoyed a deep sense of the favour of God. He was always cheerful and confident when contemplating His pardoning mercy to his own soul. He spake often of the Almighty's sovereignty, of his faithfulness to his promises, of his immutability, and of the blessedness of believing; and "such honour have all his saints."

When he went forth to the high and holy duties of his pastoral office, then the Lord whom he served did put high honour upon him, before that world which once did persecute. His consistent boldness, his steady zeal, his undaunted courage, won the admiration of beholders. He gradually lived down the breath of calumny, as

well as the blast of open assault. Many of the young men who came to scoff remained to pray: many valuable ministers, who have since gone to their rest, dated their first serious impressions from those moments when they intended to revile. Many who, humanly speaking, would have been worldly and lifeless, without his teaching, are now active and zealous labourers in the vineyard of our church. Thus God honoured him by giving support to his boldness, success to his labours, and an enlarged sphere to his benevolence. He quite changed the tone of the University towards religion. At one time it was persecuted in every quarter, now it is honoured in all; the young especially are devoted to the cause of God. Every year the number of disciples of his risen Master increased, till at the present moment the outward profession is matter of rejoicing. May the inward feeling be equally approved in the sight of that God who searcheth the heart! Patronage at home and abroad was put into his hands. The East India Company constantly placed its chaplaincies at his disposal: and if future generations shall bless the names of Martyn, and Thomason, and Robinson, and Wolfe, and various others, they will not forget the aged pastor of Cambridge, who parted with his choicest sons in the faith, that India, and Persia, and Jerusalem, might rejoice in the living God. Henceforth that honour which cometh from man was accumulated upon him; respect and veneration arose from all ranks. Still he was not moved from his original purpose by any tempting offers; he was just as humble before God—just as meek and abundant in labours before man. He remained the minister of the same parish for fifty-three years and a half, and was never absent from his own pulpit except when health or duty compelled him. His life and correspondence will contain the history of the progress of true religion in the church for the last fifty years. His papers were all arranged and prepared before his death, and from personal knowledge we can assure you, that the materials when brought to light will be highly useful to the Christian public. He lived to accomplish all his wishes. One of these, respecting his successor, lay very near his heart. Seven years ago he had a letter written to the Bishop of Ely, requesting the appointment for a young clergyman whom he loved as his own soul: this letter he put under his pillow every night, saying, “Should I be taken home to-night, you will know where to find it in the morning.” This wish was mercifully granted only a few days before his death. He dictated a letter to the present Bishop, requesting the appointment for this friend, and after a favourable

answer arrived, he said to his physician, "You will find me mad this morning; I have been drinking brandy: I have had wine to drink which you know not of."

During his last illness all was peace. About a month before his death he knew that his hand was upon him. As soon as his medical attendants had pronounced that the disease must terminate fatally, he said to them, "You can do no more for me now: you have done what you could for my poor body; perhaps I can do something for your souls."

He was enabled to testify to the supporting power of those truths which he had preached through life. On one occasion he said to his friend and successor, who scarcely ever left him, and who will publish everything that is most interesting, "I rest on the broad principles of the Gospel. I do not take comfort from portions of the word, a small bit here and another there—which seems to satisfy some persons. I rely on the broad scheme of redemption: I go as a vile, hell-deserving sinner" (that is his own expression), "to the foot of the Saviour. I didn't create the world, did I? He did. Then he *will* save me: I can't be wrong here."

On another occasion, when his attendants thought he was dying, he addressed them thus: "You are all on a wrong scent; you want to see a dying scene; I abhor this from my inmost soul. I am not going to die yet." It was always his desire to die *alone* with God.

He expressed a wish to take a sip of some choice wine; he took it with his nephew and his dearest friend. He was reminded that he would soon drink it new in his Father's kingdom, but he was too exhausted to do more than smile with an angelic gladness.

At length the hour of his departure came: he was fully sensible of it, and at times was in great agony; he thanked and blessed all. His dearest friend pronounced the blessing, "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: the Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace:" he added "Amen," and spake no more.

Thus was he honoured in his death: in being able to testify to the sustaining power of those principles which he had so long and so successfully preached. If there was one point which he pressed upon us more than another, it was consistency in our attachment to the Church of England, and the cultivation of that *wisdom* which is "gentle and easy to be entreated of." Here also he was a bright

example. Though peculiarly free from a party spirit, he was a steady churchman, and dwelt solely on those *foundation* truths which are the basis of the Christian hope. Had he in early life been tempted by a scrupulous conscience, or an overweening self-esteem, or a want of spiritual communion, to dissent from our church, is it probable that he could have done one hundredth part of the good which God allowed him to work? The very last exercise of his intellectual powers was the preparation of four sermons to be preached in the University pulpit; and he was taken from the weaknesses of time to the glories of eternity precisely at that moment when the bell of St. Mary's ceased, and he would (had his health been preserved) have commenced his third address to the assembled brethren.

He was honoured in his burial: never has the University seen such a sight, and never will again. His departure will be an awakening sermon preached through the land; and many who have hung upon his lips, and been disciplined by his example, have sent forth a long and solemn wail—"My father! my father! the chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof."

Such men as these are a nation's safeguard. Well might Elisha suppose, when he saw the prophet borne rapidly away, that the land would mourn for its mightiest chariots and its strongest horsemen. The eminent in godliness are the only chariots, the only horsemen of a nation; and when these are removed, we may lament with a bitter lamentation.

But let us not sorrow as those who have no hope. God hath given abundant assurance that he is pouring forth the double portion of Elijah's spirit on the Elishas of our church. The whole aspect of our university was quite changed by this one man. The thousands who crowd the villages and towns of Britain now bless his name for the devotion and zeal of their pastors; the sunbeam of our people's love now settles on our Zion; and we may rejoice in the thought, that many shall overcome through the blood of the Lamb, and eat the hidden manna, and become pillars in the temple of our God, and go no more out for ever.

May this be our blessed experience; may we keep to those truths which we can *die upon*; and on the resurrection morn, may we be found among those who shall sing blessing unto the Lamb for ever!

THE CLAIMS OF ENGLAND UPON CHRISTIANS, AND SPECIALLY UPON
CHURCHMEN.

REV. J. WILLIAMS, A.B.

ST. ANN'S CHURCH, LIMEHOUSE, DECEMBER 4, 1836*.

“As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”—1 PETER, iv. 10.

THE feebleness of our faith, the inadequacy of our apprehension of things eternal, is not less evinced by an indifference to the salvation of others, than by inattention to our own. If we believed vividly, we should feel intensely; and if we felt intensely, we should act energetically. Were you to behold a fellow-creature slumbering amid the conflagration of his dwelling, there would be no hesitation, but you would rush at once to snatch him from the devouring element. Or were you to witness a deluded fellow-mortal darting along to the brink of the deep, intent upon precipitating himself into the dark waters, with what eagerness would you fly to arrest his course, and to rescue him from self-destruction! Where, then, brethren, is our faith, if, admitting—as we must do, except we reject the unequivocal testimony of God—that the multitude, the mighty multitude of our fellow-creatures around us are sleeping upon the verge of that pit, that burneth with fire and brimstone, or plunging into the abyss of outer darkness—where is our faith, if we strain not every nerve to pluck the brand from the everlasting burning?

Upon all the followers of Christ this responsibility rests. Most unwarrantably has it been regarded as the function, the exclusive function, of the ministers of Christ, to set forth the glory of God by setting forward the salvation of all men. On them, unquestionably, the obligation devolves principally and primarily, but certainly not exclusively. They are rather designed to act as commanders and standard-bearers, inciting and conducting the army of the faithful to combat, to conflict, and to victory. But how little avail

* On behalf of the Society for Building and Enlarging Places of Worship.

the commanders when abandoned by their soldiers! How powerless must be the host, if the officers alone are expected to fight the battles of the Lord! The charge, therefore, in the text, though pre-eminently referring to the ministers of Christ, extends, beyond all doubt, to each individual who has been admitted by baptism into the privileges of the church, and who is made a partaker of the blessings of the Gospel salvation. "As *every man* hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

My brethren, I have to ask you this morning to contribute to one of those societies which distinguish and adorn this highly-favoured land; a society which provides places of worship for the outcast, the ignorant, and the destitute. And I know not how I can more effectually discharge the duty which devolves upon me by royal mandate, and by the highest episcopal authority, than by striving to enforce the exhortation in the text, by a few obvious and scriptural arguments addressed to you in a two-fold capacity, first, as Christians, and, secondly, as members of the Church of England.

And, first, *by the worth of the immortal soul*, we ought to be incited to minister to others the privileges which we have ourselves received. The worth of an immortal soul—where shall we begin? and where shall we end? The subject is so extensive, that no finite mind can traverse it; so sublime, that no human tongue can do it justice. Look into yourselves, brethren. Explore your own spirit. Span, if you can, its dimensions; weigh it in the balances of the sanctuary. Celestial in its origin, radiant aforetime with the similitude of Deity, capacitated for the fruition of God, majestic though in ruins, gifted with indefinite capabilities of knowledge, endowed with a profound susceptibility of enjoyment, possessing a no less profound susceptibility of anguish, and (above all, and beyond all,) having interwoven in its very essence the inconceivable attribute of immortality—can you think of it without amazement? can you contemplate it without awe?

Then let it be realized, that such a soul is to be found in the bosom of each individual that meets your eye; that the most ignorant, the most debased, the most destitute, yet encloses a spirit so costly that no finite arithmetic can compute its worth, and which far outweighs the most magnificent, and the most stupendous object that creation can supply. Shall we take the sun, shining in his

strength, and filling the firmament with his glory? Shall we balance him against the soul of the most degraded? Weigh both in the balances of unerring truth; and which is the most momentous? That sun has no consciousness of its existence; it knows not its origin or its destiny; nor is the period remote when its glory shall be quenched, and itself shall have passed away, even as the morning vapour which it now exhales from the face of the firmament. But the most humiliated soul, which we can poise against the lamp of heaven, has a consciousness of its existence—has faculties which, if developed to perfection, might approximate it, nay, might equalize it to the angels of God—has a being that shall survive the extinction of the sun, and which, amid the dissolution of the visible universe, shall stand forth in all its indestructibility, then only *commencing* a career interminable as His who inhabiteth eternity.

Can we, then, brethren, over-estimate man's value? Can we be too much concerned to save the sinner from the error of his ways, and to communicate to him the knowledge of that free salvation, which we have ourselves received?

Then, secondly, *by the loss which every soul that perishes must sustain* we ought to be incited to awaken men to their immortal interests. What finite mind can comprehend the joy of which the soul is susceptible, if perfected in all its powers, and filled with all the fulness of God? Such will be "the inheritance of the saints in light."

Glorious things are spoken of the portion that awaits them. We are told of a city "which hath foundations," whose streets are gold, whose walls are jasper, whose gates are pearl. We are told of "a pure river of water of life," which flows inexhaustible throughout its borders, while along its banks the trees of life immortal bend beneath their healing fruit. We are told, that the inhabitants shall never say, "I am sick," that sorrow and sighing shall flee away, and God himself shall wipe away all tears from all eyes. We are told, that the mortal must put on immortality, and death be swallowed up in victory. We are told, that the city hath no need of the sun to give her light by day, or of the moon by night; for the Lord is her everlasting light, and her God her glory. In short, brethren, we are told of harps of sweetness, and palms of victory, and robes of whiteness, and crowns of glory, and songs of ceaseless adoration; of fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore. Yet, after all, it is said, that "it doth not yet appear what we shall be;" that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the

heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

Bnt now this, all this is irreparably lost to the sinner, who dies in his sins. O! what a motive is this! How touching, how overpowering to constrain us to win souls to Christ, and to lead them to the fold of that good Shepherd, who "came that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

Then, thirdly, *by the misery which every soul that perishes must actually endure*, we ought to be mightily roused. Here, as before, conception falters and expression fails. Yet how fearful are the figures by which the Scripture shadows forth the torment of the lost. It speaks of the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, of the smoke ascending up for ever and ever. It speaks of the blackness of darkness for ever. It speaks of the worm that dieth not, and of the fire that is not quenched; of weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. Who can dwell with the devouring fire? who can dwell with the everlasting burnings? And this wretchedness is without mitigation, without intermission, without end? Who can think of it, and not shudder? Who can dwell upon it, and not feel his heart withered within him?

Nor let it be forgotten, that each individual around you is determining here his immutable lot hereafter. Time is the infancy of eternity, the crisis of immortality, the hinge of everlasting destiny. We are sowing the future harvest, which shall be for ever reaping, and for ever to be reaped. Awfully momentous plunge! there is but the breath in his nostrils between every child of man and the blackness of darkness, or the fulness of joy. "Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord," ought we not to persuade men? Ought we not to compel them to flee from the wrath to come, and to take refuge in the hope set before them in the Gospel?

Then, again, *by the agony and bloody sweat, by the cross and passion, by the precious death and burial of the Lord Jesus, and by the coming of the Holy Ghost*, we ought to be zealously affected with a concern for the salvation of others. Would you, my brethren, estimate a fellow-creature as you ought to do? Then recollect the price that has been paid down for his redemption. Realize the thought, that each has been bought with the precious blood of Jesus Christ. What was "the joy set before him," when he stooped from his everlasting throne to the manger, the cross, the sepulchre? What was the glorious result on which his eye was rivetted, whilst his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the

ground, and when, in the extremity of his agony, he exclaimed, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" It was the glory of his Father, in the salvation of a multitude from the fallen family of man—a multitude, countless as the stars of the firmament, or as the drops of morning dew. This was the grand purpose which absorbed his mind on earth, and which still employs him at the right hand of God.

Then, brethren, if sympathy with a friend be indeed the surest evidence of friendship, if to sympathize with his sorrows, and to rejoice in his joys, be the very essence of true fellowship, then it cannot fail, if you are the friends of the Redeemer, if you love him for having loved you, if the same mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus—it cannot fail to follow, that that which he lived, and died, and bled to achieve; that which he lives, and reigns, and ascended, and intercedes, and labours to accomplish, should be the supreme object of your being, that to which you consecrate your lives, and for which you would be willing, if needs be, to lay them down.

Nor can encouragement and confidence be wanting, whilst the Captain of our salvation sits on the throne and sways the sceptre of the universe; whilst, as our Advocate with the Father, he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him; and whilst that mighty Spirit, who, on the birth-day of the creation, called forth from chaos light, and loveliness, and harmony, vouchsafes his gracious energy to create the soul anew to love and to good works.

Thus, by arguments of a general nature, bearing alike on sinners of every country, and of every kind, I have striven, in the first instance, to enforce the apostolic charge contained in the text.

Suffer me now briefly to direct your thoughts to a few specific arguments, fitted to incite you to pre-eminent effort as MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

The spiritual exigencies of our own beloved country ought greatly to move us. Remote as is the period when Christianity first visited our shores, erected her altars and suspended her lamp among us, it is mournful to reflect that the day is yet to arrive, not only when it shall be said of our whole population that they are in verity Christians, but when it shall be said that they even theoretically possess the knowledge of Christianity. Even since the era of the Reformation, when the clouds of Roman superstition were rolled from out

horizon, and the light of truth beamed upon us with somewhat of its pristine purity, though the church, with little interval, has been unpersecuted from without, she has not thoroughly and universally saturated our whole population with the truth of God. She has slumbered upon her post. She has never discharged herself of the full weight of her responsibility. And the consequence of this supineness has been, that a deep and darkening mass of ignorance and ungodliness has been suffered to accumulate in the bosom of our land, and still remains inert, stagnant, and corrupt.

My brethren, if you only consider how enormously our population has augmented within the last generation, and how utterly inadequate has been the increase of folds for our strayed sheep—when you remember that, if that part of our people, who ought to frequent the ordinances of religion, were to attempt it, there could not be found accommodation (I believe it to be no exaggeration to say) for one half, either within or even without the walls of the Establishment—when you bear in mind, that such a flood of prosperity is flowing in upon this country at this moment, as must necessarily multiply its inhabitants with fourfold rapidity, while at the same time there is no corresponding process going forward for multiplying the means of moral and religious instruction for this vastly augmenting population—there is much in all this, to excite our solemn apprehensions, our ardent prayers, our enlarged beneficence, and our earnest exertions. It is a startling reflection, that, whilst we have been sending the scriptures of truth and the ambassadors of peace to the remotest corners of the earth (and in so doing we have done right, and I would that we had done it to a hundred fold,) yet it is certainly a startling reflection, that, while we have been taking care to send the Gospel to the heathen abroad, we have sadly neglected the heathen at home. There has been no proportionate aggression upon the atheism, and the profligacy, and the ungodliness of large and extensive districts within our own land. So that it would not be an exaggeration to say, that there are spots, and many of them, to be found in this professedly Christian country, to which something like missionary effort is as intensely needful as to the heathen in foreign lands. Nay, brethren, it is no exaggeration to assert, that, if you sought to discover the blackest specimens of alienation from every thing like religious sentiment, you would have to direct your researches, not to the savage of the frigid, nor to the barbarian of the torrid zone; no, if you wished to discover the blackest specimens of human depravity, you must explore the long

forgotten hamlets of England and the recesses of this vast empire. For, investigate where you will among uncivilized nations, you will find, that, however brutalized or abandoned they may be, they yet retain a consciousness of a supernatural Being—some notion of homage due to a superior Power. But there are, in this christianized country, many who know the name of God only to blaspheme it, who never bend the knee in sign of adoration, who have not even an apprehension of a hereafter. It is a fact fully ascertained, that, in many of our large manufacturing districts, there are those who never crossed the threshold of a place of worship, who have never been baptized into the name of Christ, who are absolutely and emphatically godless. And this, you will remember, in the bosom of a land that glories in her sabbaths and her sanctuaries, and to which the eyes of all nations are directed, as the light of the whole earth.

The exigencies being thus extraordinary, it will not suffice to adopt ordinary remedies. We may, and we ought to erect churches in every destitute locality, to stud our population with heaven-pointing spires, and to bid every cottage echo back the sabbath-speaking bell.

And what we do for our country we must do *promptly*. Popery is on the alert. Infidelity is rampant. The powers of darkness are confederate. There is no room for neutrality. There are no doubtful overshadowings of a tempest, which will work up this country into a stormy ocean, unless the oil of heavenly influence and truth be poured upon the healing waters. There is no other alternative left us. Anarchy, and popery, and infidelity, are not to be put down by legislative enactment, nor by the authority of our rulers, nor by our swords; we must anticipate victory only from the effusion of the Spirit, from the energy of divine truth, and from the irresistible influence of Christian love. Men and brethren, the destinies of our country are vibrating in the balance, and, humanly speaking, it rests with the people of God which side shall preponderate—that which is big with our weal, or that which is heavy with our woe.

But whilst Christians of all denominations among us are called upon to exert themselves, this call is addressed, with a fourfold emphasis, to *the faithful children of the Church of England*. I am not going to indulge in bigotry, nor to attempt to unchristianize those who dissent from us; I rather take the ground of our high privileges, as constituting the ground of our high responsibility. Now, brethren, it ought never to be forgotten, that the Church of England is the authorized, the professed, and the accredited spiritual

mother of all the progeny of Britain. She has been selected for this work by the providence of God: and she has been appointed to it by the constitution of the country. It is on this principle, that she is recognised as the queen and consort of the state. She is bound to feel for all the children of the land; not one ought to be excluded from her sympathy or her maternal solicitude. She is bound, upon the very principle on which she was established, to furnish a fold for all and a shepherd for all. Even those who dissent from her bosom, are yet not to be forgotten by her; though wanderers, they are still children. The Church of England, properly speaking, knows nothing of dissent; insomuch that it is the duty of every minister, to regard and to deal with every parishioner as belonging to her community, until that individual shall distinctly avow himself as dissenting from the Church; and then it is not the Church that withholds its affectionate offices from him—it is he that withdraws himself from the maternal solicitude of the Church.

O! that the beautiful parochial system of our Establishment had been carried out in its full efficiency; it would then have presented a model worthy the imitation of the world. O! that we had adhered to the principles, the formularies, and the articles of our church; then, instead of having, as now, to struggle almost for her existence, there would scarcely have been a dissenter from her pale, much less any to utter the cry, “Down with it, down with it, even to the ground!”

Still, brethren, our church occupies a vantage ground, peculiarly and exclusively her own. She has never betrayed her trust; and she has, at this moment, a hold upon the reverence and upon the affections of the people, far beyond what her enemies will admit, and even beyond what many of her friends suppose. The moral weight of this country is with the Church of England; and I hesitate not to say, that if we are to be saved from impending destruction, it must be through the instrumentality of our national Establishment. O! that she may arise from the dust, put on her strength, and be made a crown of glory and a diadem of beauty in the hand of our God!

My brethren, it is on these accounts that I commend to your liberal support this day THE SOCIETY FOR BUILDING AND ENLARGING PLACES OF WORSHIP connected with the Church of England. This Society has already done much to supply the lack of church-accommodation. The claims for its bounty are now numerous and pressing; its funds are exhausted, and it looks to you

to replenish them, each according to your several ability. O! think now vast the field. In this great metropolis how vast! in our manufacturing districts how immense! O! that the enlargement of Christian benevolence might be commensurate to the magnitude of the object, and the greatness of our obligation to uphold it! And O! that in the glorious appearing of our God and Saviour, we may meet a mighty multitude from our own beloved land, gathered into the fold of grace, and prepared for the fold of glory, by the instrumentality of our venerated Church, and of this Society **our** cherished daughter!

THE SPIRITUAL CONDITION OF LONDON IN COMPARISON WITH THE
RELIGIOUS STATE OF THE WORLD.

“ ONE of the most affecting passages in the book of the world is that which presents to the eye of the Christian a tabular view of its religious state. If we suppose, according to the usual estimate, that the inhabitants of the world amount to 800,000,000, then the whole in round numbers may be thus divided ; Pagans, 482,000,000 ; Christians, 175,000,000 ; Jews and Mahometans, 143,000,000. O ! what shame should cover the Christian churches that such should be the state of the world, of Christ’s world, 1800 years after he has died for its redemption ! More than three-fourths of the human race in ignorance of him, or in avowed alienation from him ! But there is a fact which should be felt by every Christian inhabitant of this great city more deeply still ; the fact that the religious condition of London forms a striking epitome of the religious condition of the world. Divide its 1,500,000 inhabitants, as we have just divided the population of the world, into three classes ; let these be *the openly irreligious, the occasional and worldly attendants on the ordinances of religion, and the regular worshippers of God*. Let the first class stand for the Pagan, and the second for the Jew and Mahometan, and the third for the Christian division of the world ; and you will find that the proportion they respectively bear to the whole population of London is about the same which those three great divisions respectively bear to the whole population of the world. For example : is more than one half of the species Pagan ? A distinguished metropolitan clergyman calculated the number of the latter class who are living in London in utter disregard of all religion, as 500,000 at the least : but, says a late writer, ‘ My impression is that the number is nearly 800,000 ’—more than one-half of the whole. Are three-sevenths of the remainder of the world’s population Jews and Mahometans ? About three-sevenths of the remainder of the population of London rank as heterodox, inconsistent, worldly professors of Christianity, a disgrace to a Christian name. Do only the other four-sevenths of the human race profess the Christian religion ? The same small proportion of our city population—yes, and less than that—only about 300,000, only one-fifth of the whole, are regular and orthodox worshippers.”—REV. J. HARRIS’S *Sermon for the City Mission, Dec. 6, 1836.*

THE SPIRITUAL NATURE OF TRUE RELIGION.

 REV. J. BURNET,

SILVER STREET CHAPEL, NOVEMBER 3, 1836*.

“Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.”—I PETER, ii. 5.

THE subject, you are aware, to which I have to direct your attention this evening, is, the Spiritual Nature of True Religion. Upon these occasions I have always taken the opportunity of stating, that I wish to bring nothing before you but Christianity in its most sober, and in its clearest forms. I wish not to obscure it by any abstruse reasoning, nor to commend it to you by any figures of speech; but simply with all godly simplicity, and by the grace of God, to state its doctrines, and submit its evidences, commending them to your consciences, as in the sight of God. I intend to follow the same plan now, and, without any attempt to touch your feelings, to bring before you what I conceive to be contained in the subject.

I do this the more decidedly, because it has been sometimes said that Christianity consists only in impassioned statements, is not associated with the sober announcement of truth, nor can it be brought to the tribunal of pure and deliberate investigation. Now I wish ever in these lectures to remember these objections, and not to commit myself to any thing that will at all imply this description to the statements I bring forward. I ask for your judgment, and not your feelings; and I leave it to the statements I lay before you to make that impression on your feelings which your own judgments may dictate.

Let us now see, then, whether the spiritual relation of true religion can be sustained in connexion with the discoveries of the revelation of God. The passage I have read to you states, figuratively, that the people of God are like “living-stones built up into a spiritual house,” or temple, in which they themselves minister, offering spiritual sacrifices to God, which sacrifices are acceptable through Jesus Christ.

* Fifth of a course of Thirteen Lectures to Mechanics and others.

Now, before entering more particularly on the enquiry *whether true religion, as revealed in the word of God, be spiritual in its nature, and in its tendency*, perhaps we might be the better prepared for such an investigation were we to consider some of the systems of *false* religion. But even before that a preliminary question suggests itself, and that is, What are we to understand by spirituality as connected with religion?

Now by *spirituality* some understand nothing but fanaticism and enthusiasm: some associate with it every thing that is hypocritical and connected with false pretences. And if we regard these as the meanings sometimes connected with spirituality, we may pause for a moment and inquire how far these meanings are just and fairly associated with the term. That some speak of themselves as spiritual, and lay claim to such an attribute in connexion with religion, while they have no religion, we must readily admit: no one was ever found to deny that there are hypocrites who, professing to know God, know him not, and who, professing to love him, are destitute of the principles by which alone he can be loved. From the time that "a devil" appeared among the twelve (for so he is designated in the word of God) down to this moment, we readily admit there have been hypocrites pretending to spirituality. The word, however, does not signify the hypocrisy which constitutes the real character of those individuals; it signifies a *grand reality*, of which these hypocrites are altogether destitute, notwithstanding the fact that they lay claim to it. The mere circumstance, then, of hypocrites pretending to be spiritual, does not sink the excellency of spirituality, nor does the pretence of hypocrites for a moment make spirituality itself to be hypocrisy.

We are ready again to admit that there have been enthusiasts and fanatics, if you will, in all ages of the church—from the time that the apostles themselves exhibited something like that spirit, by asking their Master to permit them to call down fire from heaven to consume the villages of Samaria that would not receive the Lord Jesus. But they "knew not what spirit they were of:" they were checked and admonished by their Master: and the enthusiasm and fanaticism with which they were at that moment desirous to take vengeance on the unthinking and unbelieving Samaritans did not constitute spirituality in their case, but aberrations from that spirituality which they ought to have possessed; and these aberrations their Master condemned.

We are not, then, to take spirituality to mean hypocrisy or fanaticism ; we are not to consider it as signifying enthusiasm or weakness, but as associated with the improvement of the spirit of man. And from this circumstance it takes its name : that is spirituality which has a direct tendency to promote the development of the powers of the human spirit, and to improve these powers : that, and that alone, we hold to be spirituality.

Having taken this view of spirituality as connected with the mind of man, and its consequent improvement,

Let us now consider, as I have already proposed, SOME OF THE FALSE RELIGIONS, that we may understand what we mean by the *true*, and that we may at the same time perceive how far every false religion comes short of any tendency to develop the powers of the mind, or to improve them on their development.

Let us take, for example, the system of *Mahommed*—a system of religion which has prevailed very widely, and which does prevail widely to the present moment. We can take that religion in two points of light : we can take it as we know it by its standard, the *Koran* ; and we can take it as we find it in its actual history, in the proceedings of the Saracens, and the nations which in modern times believe in Mahommedanism.

Now in *the Koran* we find nothing that has the least tendency to exalt the powers of the human spirit—to develop, to refine, or to improve them. Every thing stated there will be found to be consistent with the exercise of the most criminal and unworthy passions of the human mind. Every thing stated there will be found to be in perfect keeping with the utmost measure of moral licentiousness. And hence, in *the standard book* of Mahommedanism we find nothing fitted to develop the spiritual powers of man, or to improve them when they are developed.

We can take that system of false religion, however, as we find it in *the history of its professors* : and if we take all the Mahommedan nations, from the very first moment that Mahommed himself established a kingdom in the world, down to the nations that believe in his system to the present moment, we shall find nothing in any period of their history indicating the development and the improvement of their powers, so as to give them a moral fitness for happiness and enjoyment on earth, or an interest for heaven hereafter. We find the history of all these nations to be the history of the grossest immorality : we find the practice of all these nations to be in perfect

keeping with the darkest passions of the human heart, and the most stained pages of the human history. These are matters of fact: they are associated with a false religion, both with regard to its standard book, and also in regard to the history of its professors.

Let us take the general system of *Paganism*. Here again we find nothing in the *standard works* of Paganism, or in the *practices* of the Pagans themselves, at all calculated spiritually to improve the powers of man, or at all calculated to develop them in a moral point of view, or to prepare them for a coming eternity.

Take the very best productions of Greece and Rome, in the day of their highest glory and their purest refinement of taste and of mind. Take them in the midst of the most splendid institutions of their politics, and take them in the midst of their greatest feats of arms; and do you find any thing there at all calculated to purify or morally to refine? The best productions of their poets, the productions of their best authors, so far as their poets and their authors describe their religion and their religious rites, are full of the very vilest immorality, having a direct tendency to corrupt the mind, and no tendency whatever to purify and exalt it.

Look at their *practices*. The practices of the Pagan nations will be allowed to be the practices of immorality. I do not say that they had not intellects of high powers and extensive grasp, by which they could command the elements of refined government, and bring the principles of taste to bear on works by which the world is even now instructed: but I speak of their *moral* powers; and no one ever pretended to regard any Pagan nation, as exhibiting in its history any tendency to moral refinement.

I have mentioned the cases of Greece and Rome, because they stand highest among the Pagan nations, and there we find nothing like spirituality. I need not go further. I have given you the false prophet Mahommed—a refinement upon Paganism, an approximation almost to revelation itself in some things, and yet destitute of spirituality. I have given you Paganism under its most advantageous circumstances, and yet we find it utterly destitute of spirituality, the power of principle operating in the mind to the development of its moral affections and to their improvement.

Now if we find this to have been the case with regard to all false religion, (and I have no hesitation in saying that, were we to go in detail over every false religion that could be brought before us, we should find this to be the case) there may be yet another ground which we ought to occupy before glancing at the spirituality of true

religion ; and that is, *infidelity*, or *opposition to all religion*. Here again I shall take the same course as I have done with regard to false religions ; and I say that if you take the standard works of infidels, and if you take the practice of the great mass of infidels themselves, you will not find, either in their works or in their history, any tendency to spirituality, or that moral elevation of the faculties of the soul in which I have shewn you spirituality consists. Take any of the *works* of the infidel school—either the more learned and refined, or those which bring their ideas and their phraseology to the lowest level of profaneness—and you find in neither any fund of moral principle, but principles having a tendency to undermine the sternness of moral virtue, and which give to all the affections a licence on which their own depravity would be found to have taught them to act. Take the *infidels* themselves, and the case is precisely the same. If there were wanting any particular fields in which infidelity might display its powers in its greatest strength, we have only to look back to the period which commenced with our own generation in a neighbouring kingdom ; and if we allow the infidel assemblies of France, and the infidel measures which they employed to speak, do we find any thing, either in the history of infidelity, openly avowed and taught from the highest to the lowest, but what had a direct tendency to corrupt and overthrow the morals of the people ? There was no tendency to advance or improve the spiritual powers.

If we find, then, that no false religions have any spirituality, if we find that no system of infidelity has any spirituality in its nature, and if we must dismiss the idea of expecting spirituality either in or from the other, we must look for it in *that religion which we discover in the word of God*. And here I would take the same course, in order to do equal justice, which I have pursued with regard to the systems of false religions and infidelity to which I have led your attention. If it can be proved obviously beyond dispute that the standards and the history of false religions and infidelity have no tendency to improve the moral powers of man—(and I think we have shewn that ; and did time allow we might greatly add to it ; the subject is a wide one ; every part of it would bring an accumulation of evidence before you)—if it can be proved that all systems of false religion, and every system of infidelity, have no tendency whatever to exalt and improve the moral powers of man ; and if it can be proved that revelation discovers a system, in the standard of which, and in the history of the works of which, we find every thing that is

pure, and every thing that is spiritual, every thing that is calculated to develop and improve the moral powers of man ; we think we shall have established the proposition we have mentioned, namely, *the spiritual character of true religion*.

Let us take the *standard* first, as we have done in the other case. That standard is the Word of God. If we take the Bible, and examine its great principles with the other principles, do we find it teaching any thing but what would infuse the purest principles of morality, and advance the improvement of the human mind ? What does the Bible teach man with regard to his fellow-men ? Does it teach him vengeance ? Does it teach him to employ fire and sword ? Does it teach him to propagate Christianity in the exercise of the vilest passions—as the Koran teaches the propagation of Mahommedanism, or as Paganism taught the propagation of its principles, or as infidelity endeavoured to propagate itself ? Certainly not. When we come to the word of God, the language it holds, when it points out to each his duty to his fellow, is, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” What an exalted view of the grand foundation of mortals ! What work ever taught this lesson before, and what work ever taught this lesson since, except when it borrowed it from the volume in which it originally appeared ? I know it may be objected, We find the Israelites destroying the Canaanites. I grant it ; but the Israelites were miraculously appointed by God himself to be the executioners of the justice of his laws : and laws must be executed ; and it is part of the love which we owe to one another to see that laws are executed, or else the human race will be annihilated by mutual violence. But the grand principle laid down in the word of truth is that to which I have referred : “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” Now we cannot carry moral obligation to our fellow-men beyond this ; we cannot occupy higher ground than this. Higher ground than this is not occupied even by the angels in heaven ; for there each only loves his fellow-spirit as himself, while in common they adore the Father of their common family. There is something morally sublime in the law laid down. We are never at a loss for a standard : we have only to consult the feelings of kindness which we bear ; the standard is always in our possession, easily accessible, easy of application ; and whatever our feeling of mind to our *fellows*, we have only to reflect whether this is the feeling of kindness we entertain for *ourselves*. Nothing can exceed the applicability of the rule, and nothing can rise to a higher degree in the scale of the morally sublime, than this very degree of brotherly kindness enjoined in the oracles of God.

If we look further, however, into the word of truth, and ask whether there is any reference to God, and how we are to regard him, we find the same law telling us, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." Now here are the affections directed in all their moral strength, in all the fulness of their spiritual vigour, unto God. And is there an object towards which they ought to be directed with the same supreme ardour of attachment, and with the same likelihood of spiritual improvement? If he is the very head of all being, and unites in himself all perfections; then the more we look to him, the more intensely we scrutinize the excellence of his moral nature, the stronger will be the tendency in our own minds to conform to the object of our vision.

Taking these two points together, then, as containing the law of the word of truth—that we love the Lord our God with all our heart, and our neighbour as ourselves—can any commandment tend more directly to develop the moral powers, or improve them—to make their possessor happy on earth, and meet for heaven, than these very commandments? If we love our fellow-men we are improved by the very kindness and affection we exercise towards them; there is a mellowing of our nature into a feeling and touching manliness, while at the same time there is no approximation to a sickly sentimentality in loving our neighbour as ourself: and we find the same feeling arising out of the contemplation of God; for "beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

Thus, then, you perceive that, in the leading commandments of true religion, which is the religion of the word of God, there is not only a strong tendency to improve and develop the moral powers of the human mind, but there is no tendency to the contrary; it is the direct and the only tendency of these two grand leading commandments to spiritualize the mind; their direct and exclusive bearing is on the sanctification of the soul.

But if we take, further, the promises of the word of God, we shall find these in perfect keeping with the commands, and calculated also to refine and to develop the moral powers. What does the word of God any where promise which is not directly and exclusively calculated to purify and enlarge the moral faculties, and so to make the mind of man more and more alive to the things which would refine his spirit, and less alive to the things that would command his

passions, or allure him to crime? The promises of God are all connected with holiness: the people of God are promised growth in grace and the knowledge of Christ: they are promised joy unspeakable, and full of glory: they are promised a place at the right hand of God in the contemplation of his fellowship: they are promised purification in the blood of sprinkling: they are promised that the Holy Ghost shall dwell in them. Now all these promises tend to lead the mind to new efforts to spiritual improvement, and to place the foundation of its happiness in the spiritual improvement of its powers and faculties. If this be the case, the spiritual things of God will be found to associate themselves with all the promises, as they do with all the commandments, of the word of God; we are promised nothing that has not a direct and manifest tendency to spirituality.

If we go further, and consider for a moment the *institutions* of the word of God, we shall find that these, too, have their tendency to spiritualize the mind. What is the appointment of the Sabbath-day, considered as a divine institution? Is there any thing associated with the Christian Sabbath that is not calculated to rouse, that is not calculated to refine and to develop, the moral faculties of man? Is it not a day that closes our more intimate connexion with the present world, and brings us into contact with spiritual things only? Does it not hold up to us the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ on the very ground on which we are commanded to "walk with God in newness of life, being quickened together with him?" If we take any part of the institutions of the word of God, we shall find them all having the same tendency.

But, without dwelling further on this, I would observe that *the history of the working* of the principles of the word of God will be found to be in keeping with the proposition we are maintaining; the spiritual nature of true religion, as well as the character of the standard itself. We have seen that the standards of false religion had no spiritual tendency; we have seen that the working of the standards had no spiritual tendency; we have seen that the standard of Christianity has nothing but spiritual tendency. Let us now see whether in the history of the working of Christian principles those spiritual tendencies are practically developed. Let us go back to the very first period of Christianity, and see how far the professors of Christianity then proved the spiritual tendency of the principles in their practice. We find them forsaking father and mother and houses and lands for Christ's sake and the Gospel's. We find them taking no

sword that they might by violence establish the kingdom which the Redeemer came to set up ; but, with all simplicity, and in the exercise of reliance on the arm of that Omnipotence which could bring home the word with power, we find them proclaiming the glad tidings of the Gospel of Christ, and exhorting multitudes to come to the Redeemer, and exhorting them with success. We find them selling their goods and their possessions at Jerusalem, and laying them all at the feet of the apostles, that every man might have distributed to him the property thus amassed according as he had need. We find them scattered by the hand of persecution, and going everywhere preaching the word : we find them suffering in every part of the Roman empire for the principles they held, and yet still maintaining them with holy perseverance : we find them rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer loss for the Redeemer's name, when they were beaten before councils on account of the principles which they held.

If we find this to have been the case *then*, let us see whether it has not been the case *since*. We are ready at once to acknowledge that hypocrisy has existed, and existed to a fearful extent, in the church : but I am speaking of those who are obviously influenced by these principles ; and we shall find this class, from the time when the apostles gave themselves to the Lord and to one another, down to this time, manifesting the spiritual tendency of the great things of God. If we show this to be the case, therefore, we must be disposed to admit the spiritual nature of true religion, just for the reasons that we are compelled to admit the anti-spiritual nature of false religions. We find, then, the standard of this religion proves the spirituality of its nature, and the history of its professors will be found to embody the spiritual principles therein stated.

I take this to be one of the strongest evidences of Christianity—that it stands alone in its claims to the character of spirituality. I take this to be one of the strongest grounds on which we can place it against all the assaults that scepticism can throw upon it. I take this to be a refutation of every calumny that can be thrown against it, and as a commendation of every truth which it announces, and every command it enjoins. If we find it to be the only religion under heaven that has possessed in its standard or the history of its professors a spiritual tendency, then to that religion we are bound to do homage as coming exclusively from God. Where could we expect to find the author of the spiritual religion which we discover in the word of God, if we are not allowed to say we have found it as

coming from God himself? What evil spirit could have devised such a pure and hallowed system as we find in the word of God? Would an evil spirit have suggested such a pure moral scheme? Would it have occurred to a wicked man? And if it came not from a wicked man or wicked spirit—if it is too pure to be the result of the contemplation or the advice of either the one or the other, from whom did this spiritual system come, and what is the origin to which we are to ascribe it? It is not the fruit of chance; this perfect morality—for even infidels allow it to be perfect—this perfect morality, with its spiritual tendency, must have come from some source. Did it come, as I have already asked, from imperfect man? Can the water rise higher than its fountain? Can it be purer than its source? If not, where did these wicked men find these principles of absolutely perfect moral requirement? and if they discovered them, why did they propagate them? Was it to expose their own corruptions, to counteract their own passions, to throw back on themselves their own licentiousness, and to enable those who read them to write their own condemnation? Could this have been the reason? It is impossible.

But if the spiritual nature of religion is so obvious, another question arises: Why did not some philosopher, why did not some school of philosophers, discover a pure and hallowed scheme like this? Where did this pure system spring from; when we come to inquire into its geographical origin? In what part of the world did it make its first appearance, and by what hand? Did it appear in ancient Greece, with all its intellectual power, and all its mental and philosophical cultivation? Was it discovered by Socrates, the father of moral philosophy among Pagans: or was it among the refinements of Plato—one who writes in a style, in which some, in order to laud its purity and excellence, ascribed to the gods? Was it found in Rome in the days of its refinement? Did the moments of its purest tastes discover one principle of it? No; but it was found in the land of Canaan, a mere province of the Roman empire, in the hands of a conquered people who were not celebrated then, and have not been celebrated since, for their attainments in learning or in science. Strange it is that in a province of the world despised and set at nought, amongst a people held in contempt as ignorant barbarians, this system of spiritual religion should arise, and soar above all the discoveries of Greece and Rome in the most splendid periods of their history, and stand alone even in the midst of the efforts of modern investigation, setting at utter defiance the refinement of the most exalted minds amongst us! Take any of

the moral professors amongst ourselves (and I care not who they may be ; they may be the Reids, and the Stuarts, and the Browns, who have filled our libraries with some of the soundest thinking of our day) but they possess not the characteristic purity of the word of God.

If, therefore, we find no philosophy from the most ancient to the most modern times, at all vieing with the purity and spiritual tendency of the religion of the Word of God, and yet find that word coming from a quarter so obscure, and a people so ignorant and despised ; what can we conclude in justice but that the finger of God must have been in it ? We are waging war with the soundest principles of common sense ; we are waging war with all the ordinary principles on which we reason in common affairs ; we are waging war with every thing like just and honest argument ; if we do not at once come to the conclusion that under these circumstances this word must be the word of God.

The spiritual nature of true religion, then, being established, a grand question arises, and I put that question to you in the sight of God. Have *you* this spiritual religion ? I have shown you that spiritual religion may be professed, and is professed, where it really exists not ; and then the question presses upon you, Does it exist in you ? If not, how is it to be obtained ? What are you to do in order to secure this spiritual religion for yourselves ? This pure and spiritual religion is yours, through the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ, and through that channel alone. The man who rests not upon it, and gives not himself to it, has no just views of the spiritual religion which the word of truth reveals. Let me press, then, with all affection, upon you, the importance of instituting this investigation in yourselves. Have you really received this spiritual religion ? If you have not received it, may it be now applied to you in its purity, in its power, in its happiness ! Then you will be found amongst the “ living-stones, built up together a spiritual house, a habitation of God through the Holy Ghost,” and “ offering spiritual sacrifices to God by Jesus Christ. And whilst infidelity is withering, and its advocates are found only waiting till the hour shall have arrived when they shall have terminated their career in a world where they have lived only to be disappointed—whilst they are in those awful circumstances, those who worship lords many, and gods many, are without hope in the world, you will be found not only the subjects of spiritual religion yourselves, but the means of communicating it to others, that they, by the grace of God, may be partakers with you in this spiritual and pure salvation.

FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRIST.

REV. A. POPE,

SPENCER-STREET CHAPEL, LEAMINGTON, OCTOBER 30, 1836.

“ The fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.”
PHILIPPIANS, iii. 10.

FELLOWSHIP with Christ is the most comprehensive, the most blessed of privileges. To have fellowship with Abraham, the chosen head of the Jewish church, in all the distinctions which were heaped upon him as the pattern of believers and the friend of God ; to have fellowship with Moses, in his intimate communion with God, when he conversed with him face to face, and when his countenance beamed with the divine glory reflected upon it ; to have fellowship with Solomon in his dignity, splendour, riches, wisdom, and dominion, so overpowering that, when the queen of Sheba had seen all his wisdom, and the house that he had built, and all his great glory, there was no more spirit in her, and she exclaimed, “ Happy are these thy servants which stand continually before thee ;” to have fellowship with Isaiah in his prophetic inspirations ; with Paul in his miraculous revelations, when he was caught up to the third heavens and heard unspeakable words which it was not lawful for man to utter ; to have fellowship with the spirits of the glorified just, everlastingly emancipated from sin and sorrow, and with the angels in their nearness to the eternal throne, and the high honours with which they are invested ; these might be deemed privileges : but to have fellowship with CHRIST, even in his sufferings, is a far nobler distinction than any that heaven or earth, time or eternity, the church militant or triumphant, saints or angels, can present, as the object of desire or admiration.—Eye hath not seen the glory, ear hath not heard the blessedness, and the heart of man cannot conceive the felicity, of those who have fellowship with Christ. This honour have all the saints. “ God is faithful, by whom ye were called into the fellowship of his Son.” “ Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” “ That I may know the fellowship of his sufferings, and be made conformable to his death.” We propose to notice

First, FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRIST GENERALLY. It is the privilege of believers to have fellowship with Christ in the whole of that mediation of which his sufferings form so conspicuous a part. What, then, is the foundation of this fellowship? Union, oneness, similarity of state and of nature. We have fellowship with Christ, as the branches with the root of the vine; as the hands and feet, and all the limbs, with the head of the body; as the members of a family with the elder brother. What is the revealed medium of it? Faith; receiving him as the gift of God, as the surety of the sinner. The moment we believe in Christ, we are one with him, and enjoy in both worlds the appointed and promised blessings of such a communion. In what respects, however, have believers this fellowship?

First, we have fellowship with Christ *in the enjoyment of the divine favour*. The Lord Jesus Christ was tenderly, faithfully, infinitely beloved of the Father. He was his only begotten Son, his own Son in the bosom of the Father, his elect in whom his soul delighted. Now, as Christ was the object of this divine affection, so have believers fellowship with him in the privilege. There is not one of his disciples, however insignificant in his own estimation, or overlooked by the world, but of such a follower of the Lamb the eternal God declares, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." As Christ was, in a peculiar sense, the son of the Father, so all his disciples are, by adoption, his children beloved, delighted in, honoured and blessed, as sustaining the relationship. "We are the children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus." "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." Well might this promise begin with the word, "Behold!" Behold it, ye aliens and outcasts, and desire and emulate the privilege of the saints. Behold it, ye slaves of sin and lust, and rest not till you are translated into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Behold it, ye timorous, hesitating disciples; and enlarge your expectations and measure your hope by the infinitude of Jehovah's love. Behold it, ye happy believers who are permitted daily to delight in God, and proclaim it to a world lying in the wicked one. Behold it, ye dying saints, and rejoice as standing on the verge of heaven, the borders of the goodly land, for if children then heirs, heirs of the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.

Secondly, we have fellowship with Christ, *in his possession of the Spirit*. The Spirit was given to Christ without measure, that is, in an unlimited, boundless degree. His influence on the human soul of Christ was universal and perpetual. By the Spirit he was qualified to sustain the prophetic office: "The Spirit of the Lord

God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted," and to discharge the other duties of the prophetic office. By the Spirit he was enabled to work miracles, so much so indeed, that when the power by which they were wrought, was malignantly attributed to diabolical agency, it was blasphemy, not so much against Christ as the Spirit; for, says he, "If I by the Spirit of God cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out?" By the Spirit he was made of quick understanding in the fear of God. By the Spirit he offered himself unto God as a living and perfectly holy sacrifice for sin; "who through the Eternal Spirit offered himself unto God." By the Spirit he was quickened in the grave; "put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the Spirit;" for as his body was the special workmanship of the Holy Ghost, so, when crucified and slain, it was re-animated with immortal life by the same Spirit. Hence the expression, he was anointed with "oil of gladness;" the grace of the Comforter "above his fellows." Kind, compassionate, instructive appellation—"His fellows!" implying the fact of the universal "fellowship" of the church with Himself, and that, too, particularly in the possession of the Spirit. "In whom, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession." "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father." And where in this assembly is the believer who does not *feel* this doctrine as well as *hear* it? Where is the saint who does not enjoy this part of the fellowship—the possession of the Spirit? By the Spirit we are taught the vileness of the heart, and the preciousness of a Saviour, from the love he bears to sinners, and the efficiency of his atonement; by the Spirit we pray with such a freedom of soul, that in every thing we can make known our requests unto God; by his influence we enter the sanctuary with desire, and leave it so impressed, that the only relief is in unfolding the heart to him, who alone can witness its conflicts; by the same Spirit we believe and rejoice in Jesus, contend against sin, and wait for the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. Here, then, brethren, let those who are hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and longing for the vigour and power of vital godliness in their souls, find their encouragement, not only to pray for, but to expect a supply of, the Spirit. To the fact of the infinite fulness of Christ, add this—we have fellowship with him: and what is the inference? That the Spirit's grace is the essential privilege of the saints.

Thirdly, we have fellowship with Christ *in his merits*. By the merits of Christ we mean his righteousness. Now the righteousness of Christ is in every sense perfect: such an infinite righteousness as might have been anticipated from the image of the invisible God—the “brightness of his glory”—“God manifest in the flesh;”—perfect in its *universality*—obeying, as he did, every jot and tittle of every law that ever had been expounded and enforced, without the least deviation from the strictest rectitude; perfect in its *duration*, obeying every law at all seasons, at whatever cost and suffering, from the first dawn of his probation, to his ascension to his Father’s right hand; perfect in its *motive*—love to God, and an unquenchable desire to glorify him; perfect in its *spirituality*—developing holiness in every thought, desire, passion, feeling of his soul. Such was the unvarying perfection of his obedience; and in its perfection consisted its merit. But what did the obedience of Christ deserve? Who, however, can describe the meritoriousness of the immaculate righteousness of the Holy Son of God? Merit! whatever is to be desired in the favour, friendship, and salvation of God, that it merited; whatever is invaluable in the outpouring of the Spirit, as a teacher, comforter, and sanctifier; whatever is to be esteemed as a treasure in the covenant of mercy so rich and overflowing in the fruits of benevolence and mercy; whatever is to be anticipated in the hope laid up in heaven—all that is in the purpose of God to bestow, and for the saints to receive, is the effect of the merit of the incarnation, sufferings, and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, this is the consolation—this the doctrine we preach, that we have fellowship with Christ in these merits. How plainly is this fact recorded? “He is the Lord *our* righteousness.” “Our”—as though we were in reality partners with him in his own righteousness. “Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound? in thy name shall they rejoice all the day, by and in *thy* righteousness shall they be exalted.” “Thy”—we having fellowship with it. “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness.” Hence, whilst believers feel, mourn, confess, and are humbled to the dust, from the consciousness of personal unworthiness, they are at the same time, in Christ, immaculately, perfectly, and unblameably righteous: righteous without a flaw; and so righteous as to merit—having fellowship with Christ—the participation of his glory. “Ah!” says the trembling sinner, who feels as well as reads of the searching purity of the Judge of all—“who can stand before this holy Lord God—where is the righteousness that will be accepted, worthy, sufficient?” Let such an anxious inquirer, look to the garment of a Saviour’s righteousness; let him,

with the hand of faith, enrobe himself therewith ; let him anticipate his appearance before the presence of his glory, and as he surveys its structure and its worth, sing with the church of old, " I will greatly rejoice in the Lord ; my soul shall be joyful in my God, for he hath clothed me with the garment of salvation ; he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels." What is the righteousness of a David, a John, a Daniel ; what the righteousness of a perfected spirit in Paradise ; or even of an archangel, when compared with the virtue and perfection of the righteousness of Jesus ? If this righteousness be yours by faith, what can you fear, though the terrors and wonders of the judgment-seat should at this moment be revealed ?

" Jesus ? thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress ;
'Midst flaming worlds, in these array'd,
With joy shall I lift up my head."

Fourthly, we have fellowship with Christ *in his resurrection*. Was it impossible for the crucified body of Jesus to be detained in the empire of death ? It was. So shall not the sleeping dust of his saints be always confined to their sepulchres ; for as he rose so all his followers must. " As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive." Was the body of Jesus raised at the appointed season by an omnipotent power, irresistible, uncontrollable ? So at the season destined in the councils of Heaven shall the bodies of the saints be raised by the same almighty energy : for " all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and shall come forth." Is the raised body of Jesus eminently glorious—glorious in immortality, spirituality, beauty, splendour, and perfection ? So " shall he change our vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the power whereby he is able even to subdue all things to himself." " It is sown in corruption," says the Apostle, " it is raised in incorruption ; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory ; it is sown in weakness ; it is raised in power ; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." Is the glorified body of Jesus incapable of death ? It is ; " death hath no more dominion over him : " so shall immortality be the attribute of the raised bodies of the saints ; death itself, that tyrant which now darts its arrows into these frames, so fearfully and wonderfully made, and with such a certainty of inflicting a fatal wound—death itself shall die. Thus fellowship with Christ, in the certainty, the cause, the glory and immortality, of his resurrection, is abundantly revealed to confirm the faith, inflame the love, and animate the hope of his people.

Fifthly, we have fellowship with Christ *in his glory*. The glory of Christ is ineffable. "Who is gone into heaven; angels, and principalities, and powers, being made subject unto him." "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." But is there the possibility of sinners, fallen, like ourselves, beholding that glory? Is not the anticipation of even seeing Christ in his glory too exalted a privilege for us to hope to gain? What, then, shall we say of that mercy which permits us not only to behold that glory, but to have fellowship with Christ in his kingdom! O! is not this the riches of his grace? Mark, then, how completely believers have fellowship with Christ in his glory. Is Christ a king in his glory? He is; for "he hath, upon his vesture and on his thigh, a name written King of kings, and Lord of lords." So are we in him "made kings unto God." Is Christ a priest in his glory? He is the great High Priest of our profession, passed into the heavens: and are not we a royal priesthood? Pre-eminently so, in the holy places not made with hands, where we are said to be made priests as well as kings unto God. Is he seated on a throne in his glory? So he says: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am sit down with my Father on his throne." Thus we are partners with Christ in his glory: we have fellowship with him in this the amazing privilege of the ransomed church, when it shall return with singing unto Zion, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. Hence we are called "joint heirs with Christ." Amazing grace! teaching us, not only that there is an inheritance, but that Christ has entered upon it; not only so, but that we have fellowship with him, in its riches, abundance, and felicity.

Secondly: FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRIST IN HIS SUFFERINGS. The former part of our text is explained by the latter: we have "fellowship in Christ's sufferings," by "being made conformable unto his death." Here we ask,

First, *What is there in the saints which should die?* What did the Apostle refer to, when he spoke of the desirableness of fellowship in the sufferings and death of Christ? To the principle of sin. Hence, in the well-known seventh chapter of Romans, he says, "I find then a law that when I would do good, evil is present with me." How does this principle of sin manifest itself? Various. Take some instances: Why is it that, when Christ is preached in his compassion, in his mediation as the friend of sinners and the Saviour of the lost, we do not rejoice in him? It is the sin that dwelleth in

us manifesting itself in the form of *unbelief*. Why is it that, after having heard of the tender love of Jesus, the excellency of his person, the fulness of his heart, and the gracious sympathy he feels for us, we do not love him? It is the sin that dwelleth in us, manifesting itself in the form of *hardness of heart*. Why is it that, when we know we are vile and polluted sinners, we do not abase ourselves more humbly, and sink into the dust before God, exclaiming "Unclean, unclean," and feel our sins more sincerely? It is sin in the form of *impenitence*. Why is it that, when we are conscious of the advantages to be derived from habitual prayer, and that in proportion as we commune with God we are vigorous disciples of his Son, we do not walk more humbly and constantly with him? It is the same sin in the form of *alienation from God*. Why is it that, when, in the providence of God, we are favoured with any advantages which lead us to imagine we are superior to others, we immediately and instinctively vaunt ourselves on the superiority? It is sin under the name of *pride*. Why is it that, when a rival is more applauded than ourselves, or when we suppose his reward may be greater than what we have a right to claim, we feel the rising of indignation and regret? It is sin in the shape of *envy*. Why is it that, when the world flatters us, we listen to its voice, and begin to idolize it, and crave more and yet more of its riches and admiration? It is sin under the name of *earthly-mindedness*. Thus it is with all the lusts of the flesh: we may be sanctified, but there is still in the heart the existence though not the dominion of the principle of sin. Now this principle must die; it should die; and it will die, before we are presented to God as the fruit of the Saviour's purchase

There is, however, another question: *How does this principle die, so as to be conformed to the death of Christ?* The Apostle Paul seems partial to this figure; he frequently speaks of the analogy between the death of Christ by crucifixion, and the crucifixion of sin in the heart and life of the believer. "I am crucified with Christ; "they that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh, with its affections and lusts." The analogy holds good in various particulars. Death, by crucifixion, was a *violent, unnatural* death. Some die from infirmity, some from age, some from disease: death under these circumstances would be termed a natural death. Crucifixion was affected by the agency of another, foreign to ourselves: so it is with the sin that dwelleth in us. It will never die of its own accord. No sin will die from disease, for the principle is always in a healthful state, nourished by the corruption in the depraved heart of man. Sin will never die from old age, for in age it is as active as in youth. It must be destroyed by an agent foreign to ourselves. Who is that

agent? The Spirit of God: "If ye through the Spirit do *mortify* the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

My dear hearers, depend upon it you will never hate cordially the most odious sin, unless the Spirit teach you to detest it; you will never pray sincerely against one sin, unless the Spirit prompt the prayer; you will never mourn the existence of any evil, however pernicious, unless the Spirit be poured out; and you will never oppose, but always extenuate and indulge in sin, unless the heart be full of the Spirit's grace. It is the Spirit that crucifies the lusts of the flesh. Here is our strength, and, blessed be God, we cannot depend upon it in vain. Death by crucifixion was an *ignominious* death. A crucified person was generally esteemed a hateful member of society; slaves, traitors, rebels, were crucified. It was because they hated Christ, as well as from the desire to destroy him, that the Jews crucified him. And is not sin a hateful object? Is not that a hateful thing which vilifies every perfection of Jehovah, which brought the eternal Son from the glories of heaven to the pains, the shame, the temptations of earth; which grieves the blessed Spirit; which assimilates us to devils; which stations the transgressor on the left-hand of the Judge, where he hears the sentence, "Depart, thou cursed;" which lights up the flames of hell; which condemns the spirit to the fiery indignation and intolerable burden of Jehovah's wrath for ever? Is not this so hateful, that when we speak of the end of its existence, we should not mention it as the death, the destruction, but as the crucifixion of sin? Death by crucifixion was *lingering*. The malefactor did not die the moment he was nailed to the cross; he lingered there for hours: hence when the executioners came to the two thieves, they were still alive, and they brake their legs to expedite their decease. So it is with sin, it does not die at once. Young converts are often impatient. "Why," say they, "is there still unbelief and pride, and evil in a variety of forms? If I were in reality a Christian, would there be such a powerful control of the unholy principle?" They fancy that as they are justified at once, and regenerated and pardoned at once, so they will be instantaneously sanctified to perfection. No, brethren, no; it is not one prayer that will rid us of sin; we are to continue to pray, "Create in me a clean heart, O God." We are to continue longing for the Spirit; to continue looking unto Jesus; to continue to watch unto prayer; to continue self-examination; to continue striving and labouring, and contending, until the whole armour of God is exchanged for the robe of righteousness, and the sword of the warrior for the palm of victory.

The last question is, *How may we know that we have fellowship*

with Christ in his sufferings, and are conformed unto his death? Do we really, cordially, hate sin? We know we ought to hate it—this is nothing—do we hate it? We know what it is to hate any evil in the abstract: when the humane man, for instance, hates cruelty, or the generous and benevolent man hates covetousness. Now have we towards all sin against God—towards every thing that opposes his will and glory, the same class of feelings as the generous or benevolent man in reference to the vices we have specified? Do we thus hate it—though in ourselves? Is it so? This is having fellowship with Christ in his sufferings.

Do we really *pray* against it? We know what it is to pray against temporal calamities, and how fervently we can say, Lord, deliver me, from this embarrassment, remove this pain, prosper and bless this scheme. We can pray, I say, fervently, when our temporal interest is concerned. But do we pray with the same fervour and desire against the existence of sin in the heart? Does this so trouble us, that we cannot rest without crying, Lord, sanctify me! Lord, destroy pride, and every sin which is the object of thine indignation! We know what we pray for if in this spirit we supplicate this object, we have fellowship with Christ in his sufferings—we are conformed to his death.

Do we desire the *sanctification*, as well as the removal of affliction? All in this congregation are, perhaps, familiar with sorrow; but are all familiar with the desire to have the sorrow sanctified to the crucifixion of sin, as well as for its removal? Are we unwilling that God should hasten his departure, in any afflictive dispensation, unless it has made us more dead to the world, and more alive to his glory? This is the principle—this the anxiety of his children; and if it be ours, we have fellowship with Christ in his sufferings—we are conformed to his death.

Do we anticipate heaven with joy, as a *sinless world*? We may desire heaven, from the recognition and fellowship that will there be enjoyed with our departed friends—as the place where sorrow is unknown, and possess no more religion than atheists. But do we long for it as the condition in which no sin can enter? Is this the source of satisfaction to our minds? Were the other circumstances excluded from the state of glory, should we rest on this with complacency, and with this end in view, exclaim, “O that I had wings like a dove, that I might flee away and be at rest.” Brethren, the religion that saves and profits us at the hour of death and at the day of judgment, is an internal operation—not in the lips, but heart; and the sum and the substance of all practical godliness is, in having “fellowship with Christ in his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.”

"CALLED" OF GOD.

REV. J. SHERMAN,
SURREY CHAPEL, DECEMBER 18, 1836.

"Whom he did predestinate, them he also called."—ROMANS, viii. 30.

It was a saying of the ancients, that you might as soon wrest the sword out of the hand of a giant as divide one of Homer's verses. There was such an intimate connexion and dependence throughout the whole of Homer's poem, that it was impossible to separate one verse from the other, or one portion of the poem from the other, without injuring the whole poem and the general construction of it. And, beloved, we may say, that you might as soon pluck the sun from the firmament, or alter the whole course of nature, as to separate any one of the links of this blessed chain presented to us in the verse of which we have just read a part. In this chain there are four great links: predestination, calling, justification, and glorification: but there is an indissoluble union, a happy and beautiful construction throughout the whole. There is, it is true, a vast distance between the links of the chain; two of them are in heaven, and two of them are upon the earth: but they are all united, and must not be severed. The distance is no less than heaven and earth, eternity and time; yet they must not be severed: he that is *predestinated* must be *called*, and he that is *glorified* must be *justified*. The first brings heaven down to earth; the second takes earth up to heaven. The first is the fountain which sends forth the second and the third; and the second and the third are the course which brings us up to the fourth. No man, unless he is predestinated, will be called and justified; and he that is not called and justified will never be glorified. So that the whole you see are linked together in most blessed harmony. By our election we have our calling: and by our calling we prove our election.

As we proved last Sabbath morning that it was necessary to contemplate the former, "Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren;" so, brethren, from the remarks

I have made, you will perceive that it is my intention this morning to contemplate the second link in this most blessed chain : and as you see it connected, and standing as it does here, how important must the question appear to every mind, Am I called ? Have I the evidence of being called of God, according to the Scripture term, " Who hath saved us and called us with a holy calling ; not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began ?" If this question can be set at rest in any of your minds, what blessed consequences would result ! If you arrive at the conviction of this fact this morning, then your justification follows ; and if your justification, then your sanctification is included in it ; and if your sanctification, then your glorification. One link proved proves all the rest : if you could prove your predestination, you could prove all the rest : but you cannot prove that unless you are called ; it is this link which proves your election. Therefore the great exhortation of the Apostle is, " give diligence to make your calling and election sure ;" knowing that, as this stands first in God's operations on the mind, if this is distinctly proved, the rest satisfactorily follows.

Let us now enter on this subject with prayer, with meekness, with a desire to be profited by it ; and who can tell but that a shower of heavenly blessings may come down upon our spirits this morning, and that we may gain that refreshment which we want in our way to heaven. Lift up your hearts, dear hearers ; and God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loves us will bestow it upon us.

Let me point out first, the nature of this calling ; secondly, the means of this calling ; and, thirdly, the properties of this calling.

Let us look, first, at THE NATURE OF THIS CALLING. There are two calls of God of which the Scriptures repeatedly speak : and the one must never be put in the place of the other : if a mistake is made in one of those calls, that mistake is frequently most fatal.

One is *the outward call of the Gospel*. " Many are called," says our Saviour, " but few are chosen." They are invited, entreated to come to Christ : but to know how ineffectually this outward call of the Gospel often is, I need only look round on this congregation this morning. How many have sat in this chapel, and heard the most melting tones that were ever uttered by the preacher, the most persuasive entreaties that ever sounded out from human lips—many who sat there ten, twenty, thirty, forty years ago, and there they still sit ; Ezekiel's prophecy is fulfilled in them : let me read it to

you, dear hearers, lest you should have forgotten it. In xxxiii. 31, 32, God thus complains to him: “ And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them; for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not.” You have gone sometimes, perhaps, to hear some delightful music; you have been charmed; you have gone away delighted with the art of the player: and you have come and heard a sermon, and have retired precisely under the same feelings, saying, “ What a beautiful sermon! How excellently the preacher spoke on such a subject!” but that was all; the call of the Gospel was cast aside as if it were a thing that did not belong to you. Sometimes I have heard individuals say, “ How excellently such a part of the subject was adapted to such a person”—perhaps their husband, neighbour, or friend; and yet despising or neglecting the truth themselves. Thus we find it in the parable of the Supper. The lord is represented as sending out his servants at supper-time to call them that were bidden to the wedding; but they all with one consent began to make excuse; one said he had his farm to mind; another said he had bought some oxen, and it was necessary to attend to them; another had bought a piece of land, and that he must certainly particularly attend to that which had become his inheritance—that was his first concern; another said he had married a wife, therefore he could not come. Now all these excuses were taken from lawful objects: it is lawful for a man to attend to his farm; it is lawful for a man to attend to his merchandize; it is lawful for a man to look after his property; it is lawful for a man to pay proper attention to the wife of his bosom—he is a brute that does not do it; but still these are not to be excuses laid down for not coming to Christ and abusing this call of the Gospel. But this is often the case; multitudes of these entreaties go forth; persuasions which, one would think, being accompanied with such peculiar tones and such powerful arguments, must surely lead to the conversion of some souls. And so it may have been: but after the sermon that has caused the preacher not only the least labour and thought, but with respect to which, he has left the pulpit perfectly ashamed for speaking in the way he has done—that is the sermon which has been the most useful; while the sermon that he has so carefully prepared, which has been so persuasive, so energetic, so

well adapted to the people, has been lost in air, and he has never heard a word about it, and perhaps never will till the judgment of the great day, when that sermon will rise up to the condemnation of many individuals. This call, however, as to its nature, shews men what they ought to do in order to salvation, and it leaves them utterly inexcusable in their guilt and in their danger.

But there is another call spoken of in the Scriptures, which is *an inward and an effectual call*. The one is addressed to the outward ear, the other is addressed to the inmost soul, and it is this which is here intended: “ Whom he did predestinate them he also called.” It is the call of God’s Spirit whereby he first enables a sinner to obey Christ, and to receive Christ as he is freely offered to us in the Gospel. Now by this call of the Spirit of God, the sinner’s heart becomes softened, so that he yields like wax to the impression of the seal; the sinner’s mind becomes enlightened, so that he sees sin in a different colour, the law of God in its beauty, and Christ in his suitableness; his will becomes subdued, so that he takes God’s salvation upon God’s terms, and receives the Saviour in all his plenitude of grace and of mercy. While others play about the net of the Gospel, he enters into it, and is saved thereby; he is drawn, inclined, so sweetly and irresistibly compelled, that he yields himself up to the voice that calls, and is saved thereby. The outward call often brings men into the profession of Christ; the inward call always brings men into the possession of Christ: and this is the distinction between the two. Now to describe a little further the nature of this effectual call of the Gospel, let me observe that this call is a call from sin to holiness, from the world to Christ, from danger to glory.

It is first, *a call from sin to holiness*. Man by nature is living in sin, walking in sin, loving sin, embracing sin, delighting in sin: what is worse than this state of walking in sin, it is his pleasure, his delight; he has no chief source of happiness but that which is derived from opposition to God. This in the Scripture is described as a state of darkness; it is called “ the works of darkness;” and Satan is represented as the deceiver of those individuals, lulling them to sleep in carnal security, and keeping their consciences quiet lest they be aroused to any state of alarm at their condition. You will find the men of the world, in the general, framing an infinite variety of excuses for their condition; and the cause is this: Satan endeavours to shut the windows and keep out the light from these persons, and, as he has them asleep, to draw the curtains around the bed, and make up an artificial light to them, so that they should not

receive one gleam of light into their souls. But this call of God brings them out of this case, withdraws the curtains from the bed, takes down the shutters from the windows, and lets in broad day light on their souls; and the men wonder where they are. When a man begins to have this call from God, as a good old man told me this week, who is ninety-two years of age, speaking of his first entrance into this chapel, he said, “ When first the Lord began to work on my soul, and I saw sin in its true colours, I said to myself, Why where have I been all my life? I knew these things before, but I never saw them as I do now: I saw Christ before as a Saviour, but never as I do now.” O what wonderful light this call of God brings into the mind! Hence it is said by the Apostle Peter, when speaking of the honours of this people, “ But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.” They see themselves now as they never saw themselves before; and now they see their deliverer; just as if a person should be called out of a dungeon, which was all closed up, to behold the light of the sun, shedding its rays on all the beauties of nature. It is a call from *sin* to *holiness*. “ God ” (says the Apostle, in writing to the Thessalonians) “ hath not called us to uncleanness, but to holiness.”

Secondly, *it is a call from the world to Christ*. Those who are predestinated according to the divine purpose of God have gone astray: though his sheep according to the purpose of election, yet they are among Satan’s goats; they are conformed to the world and the things of the world; they are under the rule of Satan and the dominion of the flesh. Now effectual calling is bringing them out of this state, bringing them out of the world to Christ. Christ says to Matthew, as he sits at the receipt of custom, “ Come and follow me;” and the man rises up and instantly followshim. Hence they become hereafter not natives of the world, but pilgrims, men passing through it to another country; they are *in* the world, but there is a different characteristic—they are not *of* it; its motives, pleasures, pursuits, they have no relish for; they have greater, yea, heavenly enjoyments; though they live here they are in converse with heaven; they look for their Saviour thence; their hearts are there, their treasures are there, their pleasures, their joys are there. Hence they are not conformed to the world; they do not follow its passions. “ Ye are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” Now they come to better society. Come where? Why to Mount

Zion, to the city of the living God, to the heavenly Jerusalem. To what? Why to the spirits of just men made perfect, to the holy state of the angels, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, to God the Judge of all. This is the city to which they are introduced, and they are called out of the world to Christ and to this blessed state.

Again, *this call of the Gospel is from danger to glory*. Lot, while living in Sodom, did not know that the city was devoted to destruction till the angel came and tapped at his door and told him: and the sinner cannot know that the city in which he dwells is devoted to destruction, and that God is about to consign its inhabitants to everlasting misery and woe, till God tells him—either gently taps at the door of his heart and begs for admission, or with the mighty club of Moses knocks with such violence that the sinner is obliged to submit and yield himself to God. Men do not generally see the streams of divine wrath which are about to burst upon them till God comes to us: then, like Lot, they come out—the Lord being merciful to them, and leading them out of the city of destruction to glory. Hence we are told by the Apostle, that “God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ.” The first step they take is, a cry for mercy; and when that first cry, that whisper, is sent up for mercy and pardoning grace, they go on their road till they attain to glory. They are not going to a little city like Zoar, but it is as if they were called from prison to sit on a throne, an “exceeding and eternal weight of glory:” this is the object of their pursuit, and that which God intends to bestow on them. Such is the call of God in the Gospel.

Now let us look at **THE MEANS BY WHICH THIS IS EFFECTED**. There are three things which connect themselves with this call of God: the first is, the operations of his providence; the second is, the teaching of the Gospel; the third, and most important is, the influence of the Spirit.

The first means of this call are *the operations of his providence*. These are a great means in his hand of bringing a sinner to acquaintance with himself. Every thing in *nature* God makes to speak; the heavens declare his glory, the firmament sheweth forth his handy work. If you have read the life of the late Miss Jane Craven, you will find that the first impressions on her mind towards God were occasioned by going out on a starry evening and beholding the bright orbs in their splendid array. She began to think, “Why, I understand this as a science, but I have never thought of the God

who made it all :” so that the nineteenth Psalm was fulfilled in her experience, “ Day unto day uttereth speech, night unto night sheweth knowledge.” Then there is the voice of *conscience*, which sometimes calls loudly ; and God makes this a means of an effectual calling, by making it speak so loud that the man cannot resist. Sometimes he employs the voice of *affliction* : “ Hear ye the rod, and him that hath appointed it.” There is a poor wayward youth, who for a long time has been engaged in running with the multitude in vanity and folly ; he has no time for religion, his time is taken up with sin, all seems gay and delightsome to him. But behold the arch-rebel : a touch from the hand of God places him on a bed of sickness ; for six, eight, or ten weeks he is taken from his pleasures, and vanities, and gaities, and follies ; and some kind friend comes and sees him ; some book is lent to him ; he hears something that touches his conscience ; and he begins to think, and to think effectually, about his soul.

This portion of our subject might be illustrated by many in this congregation ; and many who have been mercifully and graciously called out of darkness into marvellous light, owe that calling in the first place perhaps to a very trifling incident. They happened to call on a friend who invited them to come to the house of God, and the sermon was made effectual. They went to see a sick friend, and that friend spoke about the Saviour. As happened to a dear friend of mine, a physician, who is now in glory ; going to see one of his patients, the patient exhorted him to seek his Saviour, and was instrumental by the grace of God of bringing him, though an infidel, to the acknowledgment of the truth as it is in Jesus, and living many years in the way of God and glory. Many other circumstances, though trivial in themselves, and perhaps apparently unconnected with the subject of religion, concur to bring the sinner out of sin and the miseries of it, into an acquaintance with Christ and his salvation.

I pass on, secondly, to another means by which this calling is rendered effectual, and that is *the preaching of the Gospel*. We have now no immediate voice from heaven speaking to us ; visions, and revelations, and dreams, are things which we utterly disavow ; not that these may not in God’s way be made instrumental to his purposes ; but these are extraordinary means, in which God goes out of the general mode of his providence in order to accomplish his intentions. God calls us now by his ministers : he sends them forth, the Apostle tells us, as his ambassadors, to beseech men to be recon-

cled unto him. They are his heralds ; theirs it is to blow the trumpet in the sinner's ears according to his direction : and sometimes this trumpet arouses the sinner by its blast from his lethargy and his indifference. They are servants ; and they come forth saying, " I have a message from God unto thee." They are the voice of one crying in the wilderness, and bidding men repent and believe the Gospel. You have perhaps been accustomed to suppose it a very small trifle to disregard a sermon, and to despise the minister's voice ; and truly it were a very small thing if it were only the preacher who spoke to you : but you recollect that the minister, when he stands up to you in the name of Christ, stands not in his own name, but he is, the Apostle says, the voice of Christ to you, and therefore he founds an argument on it in Hebrews, xii. 25 : " See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven." So that it is Christ who speaketh : if, therefore, you despise his ministers, you despise him.

Beloved, this is one grand means ; and when we look at the variety of places of worship which God has honoured for this special purpose, and the public preaching of the Gospel, there is a hallowèdness, a sacredness, a beauty, and a glory, about them. I never enter this pulpit without thinking that during the fifty years which this place has been erected how many precious souls, by the preaching of the Gospel, have been awakened from their slumbers, brought out of nature's darkness into the light of the Gospel, been united to the people of God, and now are going on in the way to glory. How dear is this very spot to the minds and memories of numbers before me on this very account ! " It was in that pew," they say ; " when I sat there ; under that minister ; when I was just a lad ; under such and such circumstances ; there I received my first light, heard the first tones of mercy effectually ; there I first embraced my Lord." How sweet is the spot where memorials of this kind are engraven on the heart !

But all are ineffectual without *the influences of the Holy Spirit*. Ministers knock at the door of men's hearts, but the Spirit keeps the key ; and he unlocks the door and enters in. It came to pass while Paul was preaching to the women who resorted by the seaside to a prayer-meeting, on a Sabbath morning, that " the Lord opened the heart of Lydia, so that she attended to the things which were spoken by Paul." She had attended before ; she was found waiting on the means before ; but she had never attended as she

did now ; she now felt an interest in it which she had never felt before. In this case may we not say especially, “ Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.” Hence, when the Spirit was poured out, those were plentiful days for conversion ; three thousand in one day, five thousand on another occasion, and multitudes added to the church of such as should be saved. In vain we preach to you without this, and in vain you hear without this. This is the heavenly dew distilling on the plants, that makes them bud and bear fruit.

May I not say, What an argument this is for prayer for the out-pouring of God’s Spirit ; and how important it is that before we come to the house of God, we should, at our family prayer, be urgent that the Spirit of God may fill the preacher to-day, and that the voice of the preacher may come with power to our hearts ! So would the hearer hear with more delight, and so would the preacher preach with more effect.

Thirdly, we have to look at **THE PROPERTIES OF THIS CALLING.** The Turkish ambassador wished to see Mahomet the second’s scimitar, by which it was said he had accomplished such wonderful exploits : when he showed it to him, he said, “ I don’t see any thing different in it from others :” and he immediately replied, “ The virtue of the weapon depends upon the strength of my arm, and the wisdom and the power with which I have used it.” It is precisely so with the Gospel : in this call nothing less than the arm of the Lord will do ; and hence Isaiah, after he had preached the most eloquent and soul-melting sermons, used to retire to his closet and say, “ Who hath believed our report ? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed ?” It is that “ arm of the Lord with the sword of his Spirit,” that does the wonder.

My brethren, there are some expressions in the Bible, expressive of the nature of this call, that sometimes astonish me. A man believes ; but why does he believe ? Because, the apostle tells us, it was “ wrought in him by the exceeding greatness of God’s power :” as if he laboured to describe the mighty power which is necessary to subdue the heart to God. And he goes on to shew in the next verse that it was the very same power which was wrought in them that believed, that raised our Lord Christ from the dead : so that the very same power that was necessary to raise the dead from their graves at the last day is necessary to convert the sinner from the error of his way. Think but for a moment, and you will see that it

must be a mighty call indeed. Must not that be mighty which conquers the proud heart of man, which before yielded to nothing ; which subdues the stubborn will of man, which before allowed of no control ; which enlightens the dark understanding which before was closed and barred to argument, and prejudiced against the admission of the light from heaven ? Must not that be mighty that makes the citadel which has stood out against so many assaults of the word, yield sweetly, willingly, cheerfully, and joyfully, and take the Saviour in ! "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me ?" On the question, the rebel yielded : "Lord," says he, "what wilt thou have me to do ?" "Go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." And this one call from heaven wrought such an entire change in his views that, though he was blind, he had such inward light, that the voice from heaven again spoke of him, saying. "Behold, he prayeth : " he is not despising my bounty ; he prays, he asks for mercy and grace. What a mighty change is wrought by this call, and what a call it must be !

My fellow sinner, it may be that thou mayest have held out very long, and hast been a sturdy rebel against the Gospel of Christ : your mother's tears and prayers appear to be unavailing, and your father's entreaties to be lost, and your minister's efforts all unsuccessful ; but in some happy day (O Lord Jesus grant it !) this voice may be heard through the preaching of some sermon ; you may stop your ear, but you must take your fingers out ; you may harden your heart, but it will melt like snow before the sun ; and you will be brought to submit to Him whom to know is life eternal. O this call is a very powerful call !

Then again it is a *heavenly call*. So the apostle expressly calls it : "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus." And if you look at the exercises to which this calling devotes a man, you see how peculiarly heavenly it is in its nature. The man had nothing to do before but to sin, and now he is called to do angel's work ; his business is all about heaven ; he has simply to do as the angels do, and that is, to obey God, without murmuring, without repining, cheerfully and willingly. He is now to walk with God as one who is the companion of Deity, as one who is at friendship with heaven, as one who is delighted with spiritual and heavenly intercourse. He is now to be the organ of the Creator's praises, and to celebrate them with a lovely, cheerful, merry heart and voice all his days on the earth. He is now to be crucified to

the world, dead to all its lusts, all its carnal desires, and all its affections, and to have his heart, his affections, and his joys in the heavenly country to which he is hastening. O! this is a heavenly calling indeed; and just in proportion, beloved, as the power of Christ is felt in the soul is this calling secured and these joys produced.

Besides which, the apostle calls it “a *high calling*.” “I press towards the mark for the prize of *the high calling* of God in Christ Jesus.” If we look for a moment at the blessed and high privileges which this calling confers on an individual, is it not a high calling? The man is instantly adopted into the family of heaven; he becomes one of the saved; he takes on him the name of Christ; he is justified; he wears a robe in which Deity himself can see no spot; the law can bring no accusation against him; there is nothing to be laid to his charge; he is an heir of heaven; he is numbered among the citizens of heaven; nay, he becomes a king; he triumphs over his fleshly lusts—he has the victory over them, for “this is the victory which overcometh the world even our faith;” and he is a priest offering up sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ; and he is a prophet, teaching others the way of salvation because he himself has been taught of God. And what shall I say more? He is in conjunction with Deity himself and raised to the elevation of which his nature was capable, and to which his mind might have aspired, but he never thought he had a right to the connexion before. Now he is raised above his former self, raised to sit with Christ in heavenly places, and to have fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. Is not this a high calling?

Not to be tedious, let me just remark that this is an *immutable* calling, an *unchangeable* calling. “The gifts and the calling of God are *without repentance*.” There may be many changes in God’s providences in the object, but there is none in his calling. He repented that he had *made* man, but he never repented that he *saved* man. He repented that he had made Saul King over Israel, but he never repented that he made a sinner a saint, and he never will. He suffers nothing to overturn his great design; and his design from all eternity was, that by this call sinners should come out from the world to heaven. He intended that neither the operations of providence, nor the opposition of the world, should ever defeat the designs he has in view. Calling proceeds from love, and that love changes not in its dispensations, but as to its subject. It first gives them life in this call, and it will sustain that life amidst all the opposition from within, and all the attempts at destruction

from without. "I give to my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hands." If they backslide he calls them back; there is the shepherd's crook in his hand, and that crook he uses: there is the shepherd's voice, and it calls, and they hear his voice and return. "If my children forsake my law, and keep not my commandments, I will"—cast them off, and have no more to do with them; banish them from my presence, and sever them from my society and privileges? No; "I will visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail." Blessed thought, for the comfort of our lives, and the security of our bliss—"The gifts and calling of God are without repentance."

Let me just say in concluding this discourse, *Admire and magnify the exceeding grace of God towards you.* Where shall I begin? Are you "called?" Are you "brought out of darkness into marvellous light?" Then I would say, Admire and magnify the *sovereignty* of this call. It is not a call to the fallen angels: it might not be a call to the next sitter in the same pew who has more virtue, who is more excellent in character than ourselves: they remain as they were, you are called. "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called." Lady Huntingdon used to say that she thanked God for one letter in the Bible, that is, *m*; for if the *m* had been left out it would have been, "Not *any* mighty, not *any* noble are called." Therefore she thanked God for that letter *m*—that some were called, and that she had reason to believe that she was one of the many. Whilst many who are less vicious are called, you are brought to God. Elijah and Elisha are walking together, one is called and taken up to heaven in a fiery chariot, and the other is left in the world. Two persons are sitting in the same pew; one is called and made an heir of heaven, and the other is left: and will you not say,

"Why was I made to hear his voice,
And enter while there's room;
While others make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?"

'Twas the same love that spread the feast
That sweetly forced me in;
Else I had still refused to taste,
And perished in my sin."

Why did the sermon enter the father's heart, and the child was left? Why was the husband effectually called, and the wife left? Why

was the friend taken and the companion left ? O the sovereignty of free grace ! Let us magnify and admire it.

And shall I not say, Admire and magnify the *freeness* of this call ? When was it you were called ? When you were more virtuous than on other occasions ; when there was a peculiar excellence in your character not known at the former periods of your history ? No ; but when you were in your sin, and in your blood ; and, with many, when you were running on the “ thick bosses of his buckler,” and daring him to vengeance against you. It was at the moment when you were seeking after lust, when you were walking after the course of this world, when you were seeking the vanities and pleasures of time : at that moment he passed by and said, Live ! He called Saul when he was persecuting him : he called Matthew sitting at his worldly business : he called Zaccheus in the midst of his extortion : he called *you* when you were indulging in your impiety and iniquities. Can you look back to that period and see your hand lifted up against heaven, and not admire free grace ? O miracle of grace ! Sing of it : sing of it when you rise in the morning ; sing of it when you are engaged in your business : sing of it at the conclusion of the day :

“ Sing till you feel your hearts
Ascending with your tongues ;
Sing till the love of sin departs,
And grace inspires your songs.”

And let all hear what a merciful Saviour you have ; tell all about you how he put the banner of free grace over your heads, that the song of free grace might ascend from your lips.

Admire and magnify the *honour* of this calling. You are now not a rebel, but a friend ; not now an heir of hell, but an heir of heaven ; not a condemned culprit, but a justified man ; not now the slave of Satan, but the friend of God : and must you not rejoice ? O who would have thought that you should have been in such a state ? Who would have thought you should have such prospects, and be called to such honours ? And may you not sing, and sing loudly, of the riches of that grace which has made such a distinction in you ? Methinks every called soul in this place would respond to the hymn in your books, and sing,

“ O praise Him, all beneath, above ;
O praise Him ; praise the God of love !”

Then secondly, *Take pains clearly to ascertain your calling.* I need not say of what vast importance is this. As there is a call which is *not* effectual, a mistake may be here of very serious and

very dreadful importance. Now two things certify this calling; and if a man have these two things he never can make a mistake.

The *first* is this—that he who is called of God responds to God’s call. When God calls he convinces the mind of its sin, its helplessness, its misery: he breaks up the fallow ground of a man’s heart, and when he turns it up he shews him all the weeds which have been growing there so long, and some which have been lying under ground, unseen even by his own heart—the motives and prejudices which have laid lurking in his heart. And when his law convinces the sinner of his condemned and miserable state, then he calls him to partake of his grace in Christ: and when he calls the sinner obeys; and, like Samuel, says “Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.” Dost thou say, “I am come to thee?” Dost thou say, “I will pardon thee?” What! such a wretch as I am? What! one so guilty as I am? O marvellous peace! The sinner hears the welcome voice, and he delights in it: and when it tells him to take up his cross he does it; when it tells him to mortify the flesh he does it. Hence you hear of many giving up their friends and relations, the sins and the pleasures of the world. Why? God has called them, and they respond to the call.

Then, *secondly*, he that is called of God is deaf to other calls. Satan may call, but he calls in vain now; sinners may call, but they call in vain; the world calls, but the man says, “No, I have done with you;” and friends call, but it is in vain. I do not mean to say that a saint who is called is never overtaken in a fault, never yields to temptation: but I mean to say this, that the bent of that man’s mind who is called, is consistently and invariably against sin, uncleanness, the world, its vanities, follies, and pleasures. See a man who is enlightened by the grace of God. “I wonder what has come to you,” said a father to his son lately; “you don’t seem to take any pleasure in going to the theatre now; when I used to ask you to go, you were always willing: what is it? Since you have been to that chapel you have become very different to what you were.” “The Lord hath spoken to me,” said the lad; “and I see beauties and glories in religion which I never saw before; and therefore I cannot go: I have pleasures, and meat to eat, father, which you know not of; therefore I cannot go.” There has been a call from heaven; and when the call comes from heaven other calls are fruitless.

Now, dear hearers, I ask you, in the presence of God, *What says conscience to this?* Have you responded to God’s call? If you

can lay your hands on your hearts, and appeal to heaven, saying, “ O Lord, there are many defects in me, much sinfulness in my nature ; yet I can most sincerely say that I have yielded to thee, and that the hearty desire of my spirit is, to be thine ; and wherein I err, teach thou me ; ” surely thy spirit must have listened to this call. Therefore comfort yourselves if this is the case.

And further, shall I not say, *Pity such as are uncalled* ? If you were to see an ox or an ass going astray, you would pity them, and strive to help them. There is no man you would like to see injured, or to see injuring themselves. And can you see a soul going astray without pitying them ? Can you behold souls under the bondage of sin and not pity them ? Can you look on your wife, your husband, your child, or your servant, and see that they are uncalled, and see them under the condemnation of the law, under the bondage of sin and Satan, and not pity them ; see them in their blood, and not pity them ? Dear hearers, who can tell but that you may be the instrument of calling and awakening these souls around you ? Have you even thought of this, that God delights to put honour on the meanest beings, taking sometimes the most infirm and feeble of the church, that he may magnify his own grace and power in that medium ? Will you say, then, “ What can I do ? Would to God I might be the instrument.” Why you cannot call—that is quite certain ; you cannot quicken—that is sure : but there are two things you can do. First, you can *pray* for them : you can call down the divine grace. So Abraham called : “ O that this child may live before thee ! ” So Christ prayed for his murderers : “ Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” You can do this ; and knowing the value of souls will put life and fervency in your petitions. And then you can *exert yourselves*. Some of you can write letters : why not tell them of their state ? Some can put a book into their hands : others can converse with them about the things of God. You can say to some of the poor creatures who go into the gin-palaces around this neighbourhood, who poison their life’s blood, and spend what they gain with the sweat of their brow, in the purchase of that destructive thing, “ I wish you would come with me to the house of God : ” and who can tell but that some of them might be, through you, aroused and awakened, regenerated and saved ? Let them not alone ; do not abandon them to their misery ; but do what you can to get your Redeemer honour in the conversion of these lost souls, and to gather them from the world to the church.

Finally, let me say to those who feel you are still uncalled, *See the misery of your condition.* It is said that the cure is half effected when the physician or the patient knows what causes the disease. Now the awfulness of your condition is, that you see not your misery. But look at yourselves for a moment. What a wretched state you live in ! At enmity to God, opposed to his law, condemned by that law, having no pleasure in divine things, no real wish to go to heaven, no association with the people of God, no commemoration of the dying love of Christ, no elevation of mind to heaven ! What a miserable condition ! And I hear many of you say this morning, " What can I do ? " I will tell you what you can do.

The first thing I would say is, *Put yourselves in the way to be called.* The same feet that carry you to the theatre, and to places of wretchedness, can bring you to the house of God : the same eyes that read books can read the Bible : the same ears that listen to the lustful and filthy conversation of the wicked can listen to the counsel of a Father, of a mother, and can hear the voice of the preacher on the Sabbath-day. You recollect that Zaccheus wanted to see the Saviour, and he climbed up into a tree because he was passing that way : the man who had a disease thirty-eight years, was waiting at the pool, he was where the ordinance of God was, and Christ met him : the blind man was in the way when Christ passed by ; and he healed him. Now this *you* can do ; and it will be your condemnation at the last, that the means through which this call might have met you, you despised and rejected.

Then another thing you can do. *Beg of God to call you effectually.* I think, if ever I prayed in my life, it was when I was between seven and eight years of age ; and though it was a brief prayer, I have seen that God has answered it, and believe that it was dictated by him : " Lord, save me, by thy grace." These are the words which over and over again escaped my childish lips ; and I believe God heard them and answered them. Now take this short prayer, and go to God with it daily, hourly. You have been weeks, and months, and years, without saying " Lord, call me by thy grace : " go to him, and tell him of your weakness, of the power of sin, of your insufficiency to bring yourself out of your present state, and cry for divine influence, by which alone your spirit can be elevated to joys above. So shall I have joy over you ; so shall this church have joy over you ; so shall your friends have joy over you ; and there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth. God grant us this joy, for Christ's sake. Amen.

THE BELIEVER'S PRESENT IGNORANCE AND FUTURE ILLUMINATION.

REV. T. DALE, A.M.

ST. BRIDE'S, FLEET STREET, DECEMBER 28, 1836.

“ For now we see through a glass, darkly ; but then face to face : now I know in part ; but then shall I know even as also I am known.”—1 CORINTHIANS, xiii. 12.

Two questions arise at once out of the text—Who are they that see through a glass ? and, What is it that they see ? They are not the men of this world ; for the natural man discerneth not the things of God : and what they see is not carnal, palpable, immediate ; for the carnal man knoweth it not because it is spiritually discerned. Doubtless, the Apostle is speaking only to those who had the eyes of their understanding unenlightened by the Spirit of God, and who walked by faith, and not by sight : and as certainly, if such be our condition, does he speak to ourselves. Let us then endeavour to ascertain whether such be our condition : and surely no time can be more appropriate for such an examination than the last public service of another year ; a time when we ought, not only to forecast the future, but to review the past ; not only recall what God has done for us, but in the presence of each other, as well as in communion with our God, to ask what we have rendered to him again.

Now it is expressly declared in the word of God, that “ the just shall live by faith ;” and faith is defined to be “ the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” If therefore we are indeed partakers of a true and lively faith, we shall endure as seeing Him who is invisible ; and we shall learn and be taught of Him who speaks *in* the heart as well as *to* it. We shall see what the world sees not, though obscurely, and know what the world knows not, though imperfectly. We shall know the love of God which passeth knowledge ; and we shall behold the Lamb of God, we shall see him for ourselves and not another, taking away the sins of the world, and taking away *our* sins.

If it then be demanded more particularly what it is we shall see, what it is we shall know, which the world sees not, and which the

world knows not, it may be answered more especially, first, the riches of the glory of God's grace demonstrated by the pardon of sinners ; secondly, the sufficiency of the atoning blood of Christ, proved by the justification of sinners ; and lastly, the efficacy of the renewing influences of the Holy Spirit, experienced in the sanctification of sinners.

The first thing which we, who are spiritually in fellowship with the Apostle, see, though darkly, and know but in part, which the world sees and knows not at all, is, THE RICHES OF THE GLORY OF GOD'S GRACE wherein he has made us accepted in the beloved. We attain to a more ample and adequate, or, at least a more feeling and lively, apprehension of this, by referring upward to it from the depth of our felt and admitted depravity, than by reasoning downward to it from the inconceivable majesty and the inexpressible glory of the supreme God. The one is as light into which we cannot approach ; the other is as darkness from which we are above all things concerned and delighted to escape. In that most comprehensive sentence of the Apostle—of which neither can the value be computed, nor the emphasis be conceived—" God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son"—it is, perhaps, less that we are struck by the majesty of the author—GOD ; less even by the untold, unmeasured influence—" God *so* loved ;" less by the unspeakable value of the gift itself—" his only begotten Son ;" than by the unworthiness—the profound, the absolute, and, to human apprehension, the unredeemable, enduring unworthiness of the object. " God so loved the world ;" that world of which we ourselves are a part—of which as a whole we sketch the mere portraiture from ourselves. That he should make any of human birth, and of human depravity, accepted in the beloved, is a miracle of godliness into which the angels desired to look ; but that he should make *us* accepted—that is, when we are taught of God aright, the arrow which penetrates the corslet of iron, the wedge that cleaves a passage through the inmost heart of stone. " Boundless indeed"—the believer will exclaim to himself, for he alone knows the depth of his own sin—" Boundless indeed must the range of that grace have been which could have embraced such a sinner as I am ; copious the distribution of that treasury which could raise one so abject, and enrich one so poor ; abundant above imagination the resources of that bounty which could ransom such a rebel, and at such a price !"

These, we may suppose, were the feelings and the convictions that swelled in the heart of Paul, when he declared, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." His heart knew its own bitterness so far as this—to know that it was unsearchable; and therefore he continued, "For this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe." And thus, brethren, there will be in every true believer a special acknowledgment, coupled with a special manifestation of grace to himself. The sunbeams from Christ the Sun of Righteousness, fall at once on many places, but each feels that which alights on his own head: and thus, though the true believer sees only in part, yet what he does see kindles all his apprehensions in regard to the future; and knowing the love of Christ, that it passeth knowledge, and knowing the riches of God's grace, that they are unsearchable, in patience he waits the end, in hope to be thus filled with the goodness of God.

The next glorious object which the believer distinguishes with the eye of faith, as discerned through the medium, and reflected through the mirror of the word, will be, THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE ATONING SACRIFICE OF CHRIST in the justification of the sinner; which undoubtedly is, in other words, the practical exhibition in ourselves, an impartation to ourselves, of the riches of the glory of God's grace. He hath not only made us accepted, but accepted in his beloved Son. Now we will not assume or imply that, on any other system of salvation (could any other be conceived), there would have been any thing deficient either to God's glory or to man's assurance: but we do maintain with gratitude, and avow with thankfulness—and at times we feed on the most comforting conviction with joy unspeakable and full of glory—we do avow and maintain that, in the plan of salvation which God hath developed, all is complete. He hath laid the iniquity of us all on One who was able to bear it: he has accepted the ransom of our souls from One who was able to discharge it: and our part is only to appropriate with thankfulness the unspeakable gift, and to testify with heartfelt admiration—not only with our lips, but with our lives, what God hath wrought for us. We feel the sufficiency of the atoning sacrifice of Christ, if we are Christ's indeed. We see it, though dimly, and we know it, but only in part, when we are compelled to try and examine ourselves whether we are indeed in the faith. We then

feel it, we then discern it most clearly, when we close our doors upon us in the first bitterness of sorrow, or under the recent pressure of bereavement, or in the dubious struggle of temptation, or under the consciousness of sin, when our heart lies prostrate before the mercy-seat, and the soul goes forth in the language of faith to Him who pleads at the right hand of the Father; when we say, "Saviour, I have none but thee. Who have I in heaven but thee? and who is there upon earth whom I desire in comparison with thee? I am oppressed; undertake for me: I am bereaved and destitute; O do thou adhere to me more closely than the friend, or the relative, or the brother, I have lost. O Thou, who art touched with a feeling of my infirmities, succour me. In my infirmities I lay hold upon thee: O stand up to help me. O Thou, who art a fountain open for sin and for uncleanness, wash me from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. Other refuge, other rescue, other remedy, I have none:

' Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee! "

Thus the soul, the faithful soul, will vent its inward emotions, though it sees but in a figure and indistinctly the all-sufficiency of Christ: but this he knows, at least—that if He does not help, there is none on earth, there is none in heaven, can. At such times, and when all else is felt to be insufficiency, his grace is experienced to be sufficient, his grace is made perfect in weakness, we discern the stability of the foundation which cannot be moved, on which we shall stand fast and firm though the universe were being dispersed around us. He who now intercedes in the presence of God for us, shall we not be made like unto him when we see him as he is, our Advocate with the Father, the propitiation for our sins here? But on that bright and glorious day, no more our Advocate, no more our propitiation, he shall be the unchanging portion of our heart, the portion that shall never pass away.

Lastly, we discern, though darkly, and know, but partially, **THE EFFICACY OF THE RENEWING INFLUENCES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**: and this discernment is of daily exercise, and this knowledge is of daily experience. We discern darkly, because, though the influence of the Holy Spirit is ever alive and active, it is like the circulation of the blood, it is like the pulsation of the heart: and as it is only vehement emotion which causes the heart to beat high, and makes the blood flow in the veins; so it is only some special

occurrence or emergency which calls out, signally and strikingly, the hidden influences of the Spirit. They are always within us, but we are not always equally conscious of their indwelling. And in like manner, as the whole organic structure of man is pervaded and regulated by laws, with which those who understand not the principle are familiar with the result, so that the man exerts the muscular energy equally with others, though he knows nothing of the nature and the name of them; thus the believer whose views, through deficiency of early instruction or those advantages which have been enjoyed by others, are limited and imperfect, and who would be at a loss for terms irrespective of the language of the Scriptures, in which to express the operations of which his mind is conscious—the untutored believer, who has enjoyed no advantages of man's instruction, knows by a sort of intuitive perception, that he is in possession of certain powers and faculties imparted to him by a supreme power, which he can employ as often as the agency calls them forth, the agency which works mightily within him, and by which he seems to advance in the way that leads to life eternal. Thus he can pray when the voice of conscience calls to prayer; thus he can labour when the voice of duty calls to act, thus he can resist when the voice of the tempter calls him to sin; thus he can endure when the voice of the adversary would provoke him to wrath. Whatever can occur to excite angry feelings within him is encountered and overthrown by the master principle of love. Whatever troubles would present themselves to disquiet him are invested with the principle of hope. The sharp arrows of the wicked, even bitter words, nay, even the fiery darts of the wicked one himself, are received on the shield of faith; so that the tenor of his conduct and conversation, if indeed he is actuated by the principles which he embraces from the word of life, will be a succession and a tissue of whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report: and all this without effort, almost at times without consciousness; but all attesting the living energies of the Spirit of God within him. To such a man the promise of Christ is indeed realized; he believes that he has those gracious influences, and he has them; he acts on the faith of possessing them, and he does possess them. They may be mingled, almost undistinguishable, in the moment of action, from the impulses of his own mind; but when he has time to analyze his motives, and to reflect on his conduct, he can then discern (and it is a blessed thing to be able to discern it) how small a part is nature, and how large a part is grace; and he

might see, also, that the portion which nature claims is alloy and corruption. And therefore it is that the man who is justified by faith, and who walks in holiness of life as the result of that faith, never so much as dreams of taking to himself, or arrogating to himself, the praise of aught that is in him. His very simplicity, the simplicity of the gospel, is an effectual preservative from self-righteousness, for he acts entirely on that spiritual axiom which is taught by the Spirit to the lowest and most unlettered believer, that whatever is good within him cannot, for that reason, be his own; for "a corrupt tree bringeth forth corrupt fruit;" and what is the unregenerate heart but a corrupt tree? And while, therefore, he acknowledges every good and perfect gift as coming down from the Father of lights, and constituting an evidence that he is a child of God by faith, and an heir of glory through grace, he will recognise the divine efficacy in the production of every good fruit; and he will confess concerning all, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." "Let all be to the praise and glory of thy grace, wherein thou hast made me accepted in the Beloved, and art sealing me by the Spirit to the day of redemption. Whatever are the fruits of holiness which are the sign of grace within me, and the earnest of eternal life—all of these, O Father, come of thee, and they are all thine own!"

Such, then, are things known and seen by the believer which are unknown and unseen by the world that lieth in wickedness: and now, therefore, I must be permitted to ask—and it will be of infinite importance for you to return an answer—Is it thus that *you* see through a glass darkly, and is it thus that *you* know but in part? Have you thus a deep, lively, and abiding consciousness of your own inborn, inherent, and indwelling sin? And are you aware that, with all you have learned and all you have felt concerning it, you have far yet more to learn, and far yet more to feel; that your estimate of yourselves must continue to sink lower and lower to the end of your days; while your estimate of the great salvation, of the immensity of the riches of grace, of the sufficiency of Christ's atoning sacrifice, of the converting, renewing, and purifying influences of the Spirit, is continually exalted and enhanced? Do you look forward without apprehension to that day when you shall see face to face, and when you shall know even as also you are known; and this for no other reason (for in truth there is no other good reason) than because you have carried to Christ and left with Christ the burden of your

incumbrances, and your infirmities, and your sins; because you have cast all your care on him who careth for you; because you have committed to him that invaluable deposit which he alone is able to keep against that day; because you are feeling or desire to feel that you are in him, and there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus? O let us think how many, during the year of which this service is the last, have passed into eternity, who never saw and never knew what it most concerned them to know and to see, when the light that dawns on them will be that of terror, and the knowledge that dawns on them will be that of condemnation; men whose last breath would have expired in the unavailing wish that they had never been born! But many we trust, and some we know, are now mingling with that goodly company who are now hymning the praises of their Redeemer; some who were wont to worship within these walls; some of whom we may say that we trust they found rest in the mercy of a crucified Redeemer, for they sought it carefully with tears; but others of whom we may declare that they departed in peace and hope—in peace that was achieved for them by the blood of Christ, and hope which was the foretaste of immortality and glory. Would to God it were ever thus, that you might be all partakers of like precious faith, and thus become followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises; who once saw through a glass darkly, but now face to face; who once knew but in part, but now know even as they are known.

“ Having then such promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord.” Let us walk as strangers and pilgrims on earth, confessing plainly by the tenor of our conversation, that we are seeking a better country, that is, an heavenly; declaring by our actions that, conscious we have here no continuing city, we are seeking one to come. Let us infer from what we now see through a glass darkly of the exceeding preciousness of Christ, what we shall hereafter see face to face; and from the measure of the knowledge which we possess in part, let us learn to form some estimate of that which will be disclosed in the day when we shall know even as also we are known. What, let us ask ourselves, do we think of our former state of darkness, out of which we have been brought, into such marvellous light? And what do we think of the sufficiency of the sacrifice of Christ in its relation to our own unworthiness? And what do we daily feel concerning the effectual influences of the Holy Spirit in the performance of our daily duties, in the endurance of

our daily trials, in the supply of our daily wants? What is the principle, and what is the purpose, and what is the desire, and the concern, with which we commence each successive day? Is it our principle that we are not our own, but that we are bought with a price? And is it our purpose to glorify God in our bodies and our souls which are His? And is it our desire and our concern that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ?

And, in asking this, we do not—you know we do not—require that any individual should be taken out of what is the sphere of life in which God has placed him, or detach him from the performance of those duties which God has assigned to him therein. God may be as acceptably served, and as eminently glorified, in the place of traffic or labour as in the house of prayer; and business conducted in a Christian spirit, and on Christian principles, shall rise to the throne of heaven with incense as welcome and as grateful as the aspirations of the heart in the sanctuary of God, or in the secret chamber which is hallowed by the devotion of the soul. The true believer puts on the Lord Jesus Christ, and with him, go wherever he will, his garment is never changed. With whomsoever he may sojourn, or whatever he may do, he will surely be marked out from the children of the world; first, by the absence of what is evil, and then by the presence of what is good. And as he advances in the path of life, he will grow in grace; as he ascends higher in the moral firmament, he will throw a brighter light around; and the more he sees of Christ, though through a glass darkly, the more of the image of Christ will be reflected in his own life; and the more he is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him who created him, the more will he be renewed in holiness after the example of Him who redeemed him. His life will be a perpetual homily, an abiding witness for Christ. The persuasive eloquence of a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man, which speaks in shewing mercy, and in following peace, in working righteousness, and in uttering truth, will not be without effect on those who are around him; and he may expect the high privilege, the exceeding great reward, of beholding those for whom he is interested, and over whom he possesses influence, turned from the error of their way, and insensibly led to turn to the God of their salvation. O how amiable, how endearing the distinction, to be made like to him, that illustrious man of God, whose very presence preserved two hundred threescore and sixteen souls from sinking unprepared into eternity—him to whom it was said “God hath

given thee all that sail with thee!" Ah! brethren, if God should give us *one* as he gave to Paul so many, how would all our exertions, all the sacrifices, for the gospel's sake, be immeasurably overpaid!

Consider yourselves as solemnly charged, then, beloved brethren, not only by man that must die, and the son of man that is but as grass—not only by one who has the excellency of the power and of the treasure in an earthen vessel—but by a voice from departing friends, yea, rather, by a voice from the glorified spirits in heaven—consider yourselves charged this day to reflect more of what you have seen, and to practise more of what you have known. Commence the new year on the principle that every true believer is a minister of Christ, and that he who belongs to a royal priesthood is bound to make full proof of his ministry, for the Saviour and his brethren's sake. Consider yourselves bound to do all the good you can in the neighbourhood wherein God's providence has placed you: and, whether by persuasion, by influence, or by example; whether by exhorting to what is right, or dissuading from what is wicked; whether you can influence your own family and friends to regard the one thing needful, and to choose the better part; or whether you can enlighten the ignorant in the knowledge of Christ, or visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction; or whether you can win those who are living in the neglect of religious ordinances, to forsake no longer **the assembling** of themselves together; or whether you can persuade the sabbath-vendor or the sabbath-purchaser to desist from polluting the holy day of God; or whether you can work on the intemperate to renounce that deadly vice which, under the specious disguise of indulgence, undermines the most vigorous constitution, and opens the access to every vice that tempts and degrades the soul—all that makes misery man's companion through life, and despair his portion in the grave; accustom yourselves to regard every opportunity of this kind as a call of duty. You are indeed to "seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness;" but not to seek them for yourselves alone: and it is mercifully ordered that we should advance in usefulness as we grow in grace, and that our love to the brethren shall be as certainly the measure as it is the evidence of Christ's love to us. "The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself."

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." Abound in acts of

mercy, and ye shall receive the abundance of mercy; abound in prayers, and they shall return ten-fold into your bosom; abound in charity, and the love of God shall be copiously fled forth within yourselves; abound in Christian sympathy, rejoicing with them that rejoice, and weeping with them that weep, and you shall receive manifold from your own High Priest, who is touched with the feeling of your infirmities, and who will do for you what you strive to do for others who are members of his body and the purchase of his blood. What you attempt for them, he will ensure for you; what you now see darkly through a glass, he will reveal to the eye of faith without a cloud; what you know but partially, he will teach perfectly. You now resemble him but indistinctly; he will make you like him entirely and truly: you now behold him afar off; the time is coming when you shall see him nigh, and see him as he is.

THE EXPULSION OF MAN FROM PARADISE.

You cannot read the brief record of occurrences following immediately on the fall, without perceiving that such a change had actually passed on the dispositions of Adam; and that this father of our race had parted with the principles of innocence, as well as provoked the penalties of guilt. The excuse which he makes to God for having eaten the forbidden fruit, involves almost a direct and deliberate blasphemy. "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." I pass over the paltry and disingenuous evasion by which he endeavours to shift the blame on Eve; although this demonstrates that lofty integrity no longer bore sway within him. "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me." He tacitly insinuates that God himself was the author of evil: he traces his disobedience to the gift of the Creator; implying, if not directly affirming, that had that gift been withheld, or been more capable of resisting temptation, he should not himself have incurred displeasure: and thus his representation was strongly tinged with blasphemy. This stands forth as sufficient witness, that Adam had become a corrupted as well as a condemned creature: he was condemned, for he had broken a positive command; he was corrupted, for he had arraigned the proceedings of a perfect being. Thus we must take the consequences of the fall under a two-fold aspect: we have a share in the guilt of Adam; and we have a share in the degeneracy of Adam: there is penalty hanging over us on the one hand, and there is pollution attaching to us on the other. And when you demand of me to explain all that from which God drove out the human race, I must open before you two distinct and separate store-houses. In the first there shall be the glories of immortality, and the crowns and palms of accepted creatures: and from all the enjoyments of the eternal inheritance, I tell you God drove out the man. In the second there shall be holy dispositions, and pure affections, and lofty and noble desires; and from all the array of feelings which belong to unsullied innocence, I tell you that God drove out the man. Man, in the strictest and most unlimited sense, was driven out from God: punishment pursued him, and the power of seeking God was lost. So that it was not a temporary alienation; it was not the banishment of a day, or a year, or a century: for even had the penalty incurred been a finite penalty, still, inasmuch as there was now an obliquity in the will, and a corruption in the

desire, man freed from punishment would still have been man far from God ; he would have possessed neither the inclination nor the ability to return ; and we are forced to conclude in the largest sense, that he was driven out from holiness, driven out from happiness, yea, driven out from God, who alone is the centre of whatever is holy and whatever is happy.

Now, I stated to you, that in this examination of *the whence or from what*, man was driven, we should be met with a conspicuous display of the justice of the Most High. You behold this justice as a most righteous and unbending attribute : for here is the very being for whose reception God had prepared this earth, and adorned it with exuberant displays of his workmanship—the being to whom he had given dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowls of the air, and over every living thing that moveth on the earth—here is this being, the object of the tenderest solicitude of Deity, exiled and banished for one solitary offence. The penalty had been incurred, and not one jot of it shall be remitted : the law had been infringed, and justice must be satisfied. If there be one individual who would presume on the compassion of the Creator—who would ever flatter himself that justice shall not at length be found so rigid as it hath been represented in the declarations of a morose and bigoted priesthood—then I would make that individual tremble at the words, “So he drove out the man.” Thou canst not plead in extenuation the thousandth part of what Adam might have pleaded : thou canst not be beloved as Adam was beloved : one offence his—millions of offences thine : thou canst not appeal as he might have appealed, to the holy communings of early days. He might have spoken pathetically of his former walking with God : he might have dwelt on the sweetness of departed hours : he might have implored forgiveness by the memory of sanctified and enraptured friendship—and yet “he drove out the man.”—REV. H. MELVILL, B.D.

THE MISSIONARY'S MESSAGE SUITED TO ALL.

HON. AND REV. G. T. NOEL, A.M.

ST. MARY'S CHURCH, ISLINGTON, JANUARY 4, 1837*.

* And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house; and he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes, and was baptized, he and all his, straightway."—Acts, xvi. 32, 33.

It becomes my duty this evening, my Christian brethren, to address you upon the subject of Christian missions. And in order to introduce the subject to your notice, I have referred to circumstances that once took place in a heathen town, descriptive of the effect of that blessed Gospel, which is still, wherever it is preached, the power of God unto salvation, when God brings home its truths to the heart by that mighty working, whereby he subdues the rebellious will, and sanctifies the depraved affections of man.

The Apostle Paul had received intimation, in a miraculous manner, to direct his missionary labours towards Macedonia; he gathered it to be the Lord's will, that he should go into that region of the earth. And we find him at the town of Philippi, where it pleased God greatly to bless his efforts. We find, that in after days, he addressed a letter to the Christian church in that city, which is yet extant with us; a letter, which, written out of the fulness of a grateful heart, delights to recollect what God had done amidst the saints that were then at Philippi. At the time to which the narrative before us refers, a new era had taken place in the history of God's church. Until that time, the church of God had been, in its state and character, exclusive; God, in his providence, had raised up a partition wall between the Jew and the Gentile; and the mercies of God, in his wise and sovereign providence, were greatly limited; Christ had not yet been glorified, and the Spirit of God had not yet widely descended upon men. Known unto God, my brethren, are all his works and designs, from the foundation of the world. And whatever other reasons may be assigned, why the character of the church of God was so long exclusive, we learn at least to say this from scripture, that, in the wisdom of God, it pleased him to shew

* On behalf of the Islington Auxiliary Church Missionary Association.

that "the world by wisdom knew not God," that the boasted efforts of human reason were inadequate to retrace the character of God, which sin had blotted from the earth. And God had seen fit to select one people to be a typical people, to bear his name for a time, and to be the depository of those oracles of mercy, the extent of which would be realized in after days, when it would please him to throw down that middle wall of partition, and to extend the mercies of redemption to the last and lowest of mankind, to prove himself to be the God of the Gentile, as well as of the Jew. From the time that Jesus Christ came into the world, and gave a commission to his disciples, that exclusive dispensation of the church terminated; and a new condition of the church took place, which we may well call a missionary state. Now God would have all men to be saved. He had realized all the purposes he had designed in the exclusive dispensation of his church. And now the great Redeemer of mankind had extended his arms upon the cross, in token of his disposition to clasp the whole world to his bosom; and he had commanded his disciples to "go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." The whole history of Jesus Christ was indeed a missionary history. The anthem that hailed his advent into the world, was a missionary anthem: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men." It was not to Palestine alone, that good will was limited; that good will, preaching peace by Jesus Christ, was to be extended to all mankind. And his whole life was a missionary life; he went from village to village to proclaim the new doctrine of mercy; he stood amidst the guilty, the wretched, and the sad, the herald of mercy to mankind; his accents were those of continual pity and compassion—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And his most affecting prayer, when he hung upon the cross, referred to the Gentile as well as to the Jew; there were Roman soldiers engaged in the process of his destruction, and he breathed out this prayer, that had no limit in its meaning, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And when he had breathed upon his disciples, ere he re-ascended to the glory which he had with his Father before the world was, he commissioned his disciples to carry that message, the meaning of which they would ere long fully comprehend, to the utmost ends of the earth, that wherever sin had wrought sorrow and produced guilt, there might the great remedy for guilt and sorrow be known; and from those ends of the earth, however desolate, the cry might arise, of the spirit of man, contrite

and afflicted; like the shipwrecked mariner ready to perish, from the ends of the earth he might cry, "Lead me to the rock that is higher than I."

And, my brethren, this state of the Christian church yet continues. Eighteen centuries have rolled away, and the commission given to the Apostles yet remains in force, and will remain in force, until a third dispensation shall be apparent in the church of Christ—the triumphant and millennial period, when the earth shall no longer be full of the habitations of cruelty, when it shall no more be said, as now we have read, that "the earth was filled with violence;" the earth shall be then full of the knowledge of God, as the waters cover the sea. And that same Jesus, on whose name persecution and scorn had long rested, shall re-appear without sin the second time unto salvation, to be the "Prince of the kings of the earth," and to "reign before his ancients gloriously." Then shall his will be realized, in the accomplishment of those vast, those rich, and extensive promises, which unfold the purposes of God, in all their generosity and power, to the miserable race of Adam.

At the time, then, to which the history of the text refers, the Apostle Paul, in imitation of those who had received the last commission of Christ, and himself having received a miraculous and spiritual commission, was now in Macedonia, beckoned thither because men were standing in the utmost need of that instruction which the revelation of God can alone impart. I would consider, therefore, in order to place more particularly before you the circumstances of the history—I would consider the commission, which the Apostle Paul had received from Christ, and the success which accompanied the fulfilment of that commission.

The Apostle tells us, in one part of this history of the Acts of the Apostles, that he received a direct commission from Jesus Christ who had miraculously appeared to him, on his journey to Damascus. He tells king Agrippa, when standing before the bar of the Roman judge, that he had heard addressed to him these words: "Rise, and stand upon thy feet; for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of those things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which

are sanctified by faith that is in me. Whereupon," he adds, "O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: but showed first unto them at Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance." This great Apostle to the Gentiles tells us, also, that he was "not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ;" because it was the power of God unto salvation to every one that believed, whether to the Jew or to the Gentile. There were many things that might have caused shame in his mind; he was known to have opposed that blessed Gospel, that new way of life; he was known to have been its bitterest enemy; and we are well acquainted with the difficulty that stands in the way of a proud and self-righteous heart, in declaring such a change of mind, as that he now foregoes all former notions, associations, and opinions, and stands up the defender of doctrines he had vilified and opposed. But, my brethren, there were motives fully adequate to overpower all antagonist motives in the mind of the Apostle. When the kingdom of God was brought in all its lustre upon his mind, when he comprehended that kingdom, when he understood the nature of the mediation which God had instituted in the power of his incarnate Son, when he comprehended with all saints what was the height, and depth, and length, and breadth, of that immeasurable love, wherewith God in Christ had loved man; when the new feelings of contrition, and gratitude, and love had exerted, through the power of the Holy Ghost, their salutary and sacred influence upon his heart—a new world had opened before him; every thing appeared to be changed; nothing was worth living for, but the understanding of the purposes of God in Christ Jesus; the kingdom of God was now the great point that absorbed his whole soul; and he therefore declares, that, whether he was to be accounted sober, or whether beside himself, the love of Christ constrained him henceforth to forego every former opinion that was opposed to truth and righteousness, and under the direct inspiration of God the Saviour, to make known his will, as the pole-star by which man may steer his way through the tempestuous ocean of this present world. He "was not disobedient to the heavenly vision." The command he had received, he treasured in his soul. He knew its worth. He knew the claims that God had upon him. And when speaking in after times of every form of disaster and calamity by which the human mind can be tried, he said, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear

unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry that I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God."

Our Lord described the commission which he gave to him, as intended to be the instrument of "opening the blind eyes," of "turning men from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God, that they might receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Christ Jesus." Words, my brethren, are inadequate to explain the depth of meaning which these expressions of Christ contain. The world is sunk in darkness, and the curse of God, on account of sin, rests heavily upon it; and the penalty of sin is alienation from God, and everlasting misery in that alienation from him: and there is no single ray that falls upon that darkness, that we can accredit as a ray of true light. It is reserved for the Gospel of Christ, to pour its healing radiance upon that darkness; and there is no other inlet for light, no other means of knowledge which shall place the soul in possession of peace, but that Gospel. How beautifully is the real nature of the Gospel described by anticipation, in that expression of Job, "Acquaint thyself with God, and be at peace!" To know God, and Jesus Christ whom God hath sent, is life eternal. And therefore the Apostle gave up his whole life, consecrated every faculty of mind and body to the proclamation of this character of God, in the belief of which rested all the welfare of human creatures.

Let us, however, go to the second point, **THE SUCCESS WITH WHICH THE FULFILMENT OF THIS COMMISSION WAS ATTENDED.**

We judge, from the statement made by the Apostle in his letter to the Philippian church, that there were many converts to the Christian faith, converts very dear to the heart of the Apostle, towards whom he exercised all the fatherly love of his heart, and cherished them as a nurse cherisheth her children. But we have, in the history before us, an account of two of these converts, very different in external circumstances and as to the appearance of moral character. The one is Lydia; the other is the jailer. And I would direct your attention, briefly, to the history of these two persons, in this heathen land in order that we may be led to the consideration of the adaptation of the Gospel to every description of human character, how it enfolds, within its provisions of grace and kindness, all the characters of men. For we have, I think, in these two persons before us, the two extremes of character—the

gentle, quiet character, and the stern and ferocious character ; and we shall find that the Gospel in Philippi, was precisely the same Gospel to the one case as to the other, that the process of mercy was precisely the same in the one case as in the other.

We are told, that it was the custom of the Apostles to go and speak to the persons who were by the river side, on the sabbath. It is said, by the historian, " On the Sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made, and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither ; and a certain woman, named Lydia, a seller of purple of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us ; whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul ; and when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there ; and she constrained us." It is probable, I think, that this place of prayer was connected with the Jewish proselytes, who called upon the true God ; and this Lydia was probably first a heathen worshipper, but afterwards converted to the knowledge of the true God, though ignorant of the Gospel of Christ, and, like the Ethiopian eunuch, was following her light where it led the way, if haply feeling after God, she should find him. And she did find him. It pleased God to open her heart. But mark, my brethren, the conversion of Lydia to the Christian faith is not stated as the result of her own amiableness, of her own previous devout character. It is not stated that, being destitute of prejudices, and being of a large mind and of a candid spirit, she received, upon the evidence of truth, the doctrines of truth. But it is said, that " the Lord opened her heart, that she attended to the things that were spoken of Paul." It was by the silent whispers of the great Teacher and holy Comforter, whose office it is to take of the things of Christ and to show them to the soul ; it was by that influence, that this gentle, and amiable, and devout person received power to become a disciple of Christ, to open her heart to the reception of the Gospel doctrines, to lay her pride and former opinions, whatever they may have been, at the Saviour's feet, and to receive him as all her salvation and all her desire. And she was ready at once to testify her attachment to this Saviour, by being baptized into his name, by receiving the herald of his mercy as a guest into her own house, and by accrediting, by all the influence she may have had, the message and the character of the Apostle to the Gentiles.

But there is another character brought before our view in this town of Philippi. It pleased God to prepare the way for this remarkable conversion, by the persecution stirred up against the Apostle Paul. He had been grieved by witnessing a young person under the influence of a spirit of divination, and he had cast out that spirit of divination ; the consequence of which being that gain no longer accrued to her masters, a tumult was stirred up against the Apostle, and he, with his companion Silas, was thrown into prison, into " the inner prison." And we are told, that the jailer, having a commission to keep them in close custody, very sternly and harshly " thrust them into the inner prison, making their feet fast in the stocks." That God, whom they served, upheld them in this trial. It may have been, that, in the midst of the many scenes of revelry heard in the midnight hour, the contrast would be great, between the mirthful worldling and the imprisoned Apostle and his fellow-labourer ; but we are told, that such was the grace, and such the consolation of his love, that the Apostle and his fellow-labourer sang praises in that midnight hour, and the prisoners heard them. Those dungeon walls re-echoed sounds never heard within them before. These men, despised and rejected, and rudely imprisoned, had inward joys the world knew not of, soared by faith where no prosperous worldling could follow them, had fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, who spread a table in this dark scene before them, in the presence of their enemies. They " sang praises unto God, and the prisoners heard them." And God wrought a miracle to deliver them. An earthquake awakened the jailer ; and fearing that the prisoners had fled, the stern and ferocious heathen, stung with apprehension that his character would suffer, and his place be endangered, was ready to lay violent hands upon himself, and to commit suicide ; when Paul, with that calm, benevolent, and generous temper, which it is the peculiar power and office of Christianity to produce, arrested him in his rash purpose—" Do thyself no harm, for we are all here." And then the keeper of the prison, we are told, " called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved ? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." What a change is suddenly wrought in this man's heart ! Ambition, alarm for the consequence of his action in this world, pass away. All the anxieties and interests of the present moment are absorbed, in a new and strange interest—that of eternity. The benevolence,

the calmness, the happiness of these men arrested his attention; but it was to the same power that opened Lydia's heart, that he owed the impressions now made upon his own. It was to the mighty working of the Eternal Spirit, that bows the human will, that arrests the human intelligence, and changes the bent, and purpose, and disposition of the soul—it was to that great Teacher, that he owed now a strange and mysterious alteration in all his views. A light from heaven had beamed in upon his heart, and all the great things of salvation were now crowding in upon his soul. His alarm was the alarm of a man that feels that he owes to God a responsibility that he has never considered—a man, who feels that, if God were to enter into judgment with him, hope would wither for ever. And now he is taught by these prisoners, that they, who seemed destitute of human power, were in possession of heaven's own remedies, had balm for the festering heart of man, had power to break their chains asunder, and to bring them out of the captivity of sin, and from the penalty of eternal death, into the liberty and happiness of God's redeemed children. And to his anxious query of “What must I do to be saved?” they answered in that simple language, which, because it is so simple, my brethren, is adequate instruction to the least and lowest of mankind. It is because the message of the Gospel does not need the science of philosophy, nor the development of human talent—it is because it is a message that goes straight and direct to the necessities of the human soul, and points out that which the poor man can comprehend equally with the rich—it is because of this its adaptation to the general character of human guilt and misery, that it has its mighty operation under the teaching of the Spirit of God. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” The atonement of his blood, the perfection of his righteousness, the extent of his compassions, the power that rests in him in heaven and in earth, the purpose of grace that is in his heart, the large and generous compassion that never fails within his bosom, when he thinks and looks upon human creatures—this love of the Lord Jesus Christ is adequate to do its hallowed work, and tell its mighty errand to the human soul. And we are told, that this man when “they spake unto him further the word of the Lord and to all that were in his house, took them the same hour of the night” (how quick was the teaching of God! What a world, as it were, of events had happened, connecting themselves with eternity!) “he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes, and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.” The stern, ferocious

man, the heathen that poured contempt upon the name of Christ, and seemed to outgo the orders he had received of the magistrates, through his own sternness—this man is changed from the lion into the lamb, binds up the wounds he had loved to inflict, binds up the wounds he glorified perhaps in inflicting, stands now simply, earnestly desirous of mercy, struck by the character of the Apostles, and yet more by the character of their Master, and, with a heart healed by grace, a heart cheered by the sovereign display of everlasting love to one of the chief of sinners, has learnt to taste his Master's mercy, and to partake of his Master's spirit.

Now, my brethren, not to pursue this subject further, I would come to the practical application of it to the occasion before us. I think that the character of this Philippian jailer, is, perhaps, one of the sternest features that we can find in heathenism, and that, if the commission which Jesus Christ gave to his disciples has not been repealed, and if no change has taken place by the lapse of years in the moral condition of mankind, then you have in this statement all that you need for the confirmation and encouragement of your efforts and purposes in respect to Christian missions. Ungodly men may smile in idle scorn at the idea of a messenger of Christ going forth to stand in the midst of a large population, whose idolatrous views are enshrined in all the fondest associations of infancy, in all the associations handed down from generation to generation. That a man coming forth from a distant island should take his place amidst the thousands and tens of thousands of men, whose superstitions or idolatries are thus rivetted by education, and by all that is dear to the human heart, in the matter of opinion; men of the world smile at the supposition that a missionary shall succeed. But, my brethren, they know not the ground, either of the obligation under which the missionary proceeds, or of the encouragement by which he is affected. They judge without data; they are ignorant of God, and of themselves; and no wonder their judgment is according to error, and not according to truth. Why is it, brethren, that in any age of the world, Christianity has found its way to the human heart? Why, in this land, are we assembled within the sacred walls of a Christian church, instead of being still addicted to all the cruel superstitions of the ancient Britons? Is not the answer precisely that which the history before us supplies? "The Lord opened the heart of Lydia, that she attended to the things which were spoken to her of Paul;" the Lord changed the inwrought ferocity of the heathen jailer, and made him a humble, kind,

obedient servant of the Master whom Paul served. Yea, why did Paul himself become a herald of this salvation, but because a light, brighter than the noon-day sun, shone upon his eyes, and a power, more wondrous than the burning lustre of that sun, had affected his heart, divested him of pride, and laid him where a man ought to be laid, at the footstool of everlasting mercy? Then, brethren, if the wants of the world are what they were in the apostles' days, if man is still the poor, guilty, perishing creature that he was then, the Gospel is now what it was then in God's purpose, and in God's design, and in God's execution, in the way of peace, of pardon, of endless blessedness; and all that the Gospel did in those days for heathens such as these, it is reserved for the Gospel in our days to accomplish.

And, my brethren, what facilities has God opened to the manifestation of this his Gospel, through the various missionary societies, and through the peculiar construction of those societies, their branches, and their penny associations! There are now opportunities, even in the most distant villages of our land, for persons, who would otherwise feel cut off from all participation in a work like this, to contribute and promote it. You can imagine, in former times, many a humble, heaven-taught soul, with the pages of the Bible before him, thinking of the heathen lands, and of the ignorance of many a fellow-creature; and if the wish came into the heart, that such an one, in poverty, and unknown to others, could contribute, there was no channel opened. But now the channels are so open, that the very penny of the poor, the penny of the child, finds its way to its proper destination, is not lost, is not misspent. And thus He, who said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive," has wrested the former monopoly of benevolence from the hands of the wealthy, and opened this commerce of love to the poorest and the meanest of the disciples of Christ. There is something, my brethren, beautiful in the structure of our societies, which open those channels through which the little rills of mercy may flow, obedient to God's bidding, to irrigate the parched wilderness of this world.

And, my brethren, what abundant success has God granted! He has not left us to do his work, without encouraging us by marking the success of it. He might, to try our faith, have long refrained from giving any trophy of his grace to our missionary efforts. He might have tried the faith of persons, as indeed he has—and perhaps it is one of the most beautiful specimens of strong faith on record,

that a female missionary to the Burman empire was ready to say that, if she and her husband could do no other, by a long life, than prepare the way for another to come after and to reap the trophies of the Gospel, she would be well content. God, at last, be it recollected, does not say, "Well done, good and *successful* servant," but, "Well done, good and *faithful* servant." But he has not left us to these trials. Surely he has granted, in every part of the world where our missionary stations have been planted, that kind of success which we might have anticipated. He has given, I think, as large a measure of success as, under the circumstances of the present condition of the world, we might have expected. And we have to bless him for that measure of success, which has attended these heralds of salvation. Yes, my brethren, I might surely turn to the shores of the Pacific, to New Zealand, to India, and ask, whether there are not there trophies to the power of the cross, whether the arm of the Lord has not there been laid bare, whether the teaching of the Spirit has not been effectual, whether the conversion of many a heart does not still attest the Gospel to be, what the apostle Paul knew it to be and saw it to be, "the power of God unto salvation?"

And, therefore, with the command of Christ before us, with the blessing of God before us, with the wants of the world before us, with the peculiar facilities to missions before us, which the providence of God has opened to us, shall we not contribute yet more liberally, and pray more earnestly, and enter into the success of these efforts more keenly and anxiously? Shall we not see Christ before us, waiting to look upon the finished consummation of his love, the travail of his soul, in which he shall be satisfied? Shall we not think of Him, as prophetically he was presented to us to-night, as crying upon the cross "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Shall we not think of Him, as seated at his Father's right hand, having received all power in heaven and in earth, and therefore having commissioned his disciples to go forth? Shall we not think of Him, as looking down with the eye of the Advocate and the Intercessor, yearning with that same unfatigued tenderness which he manifested when on earth? Shall we not see Him thus before us? Shall we not hear Him, saying to the Apostle, whom he received back again into his blessed fellowship, though he had denied him, and giving him, as the privilege of restored love and communion, the command, "Feed my sheep," "Feed my lambs?" Shall we, men and brethren, think of these things—shall we recollect our own mercies, mercies so dearly bought, mercies that reach to the utmost

necessities of our souls—shall we, in the perception, in the recollection of these things, be slack to do God's work? Shall we give niggardly? Rather let us give in the spirit of generous love, in the spirit of ardent gratitude. Shall we not ask ourselves, whether we have come up to that measure of charity which God looks for at our hands, and bless him for the opportunity of doing his work while it is day? for to us “the night cometh, when no man can work.”

YIELDING OURSELVES UNTO GOD.

HON. AND REV. B. W. NOEL, A.M.

ST. JOHN'S CHAPEL, BEDFORD ROW, JANUARY 1, 1837.

“ But yield yourselves unto God.”—ROMANS, vi. 13.

AT the close of another of those brief years into which our transitory life is divided, it is natural that we ask ourselves what we have been believing and what we have been doing during the past year; and also what it is our purpose, through the divine help, to believe and to do for the future. We look upon the map of our lives, as it were, and trace our past course, in order that we may be improved by all that has been wrong, and warned by every mistake into which we may have fallen; and that we may be led to inquire what is the course we are about to pursue—whether it is probable we shall be improved rapidly, or whether we should fall again and again into those errors through which we have already passed.

Perhaps we could have selected no passage more suitable to assist us in determining what, by God's help, we may do during the year on which we this day enter, than that which I have read. It is a divine command, of the largest extent, and the most imperative obligation, and which, if obeyed, will determine the whole course of our existence: “ Yield yourselves unto God.” It is a divine direction given to us from the beginning of the year to the end of the year: shall we obey it or not? It should be frequently presented to our thoughts as the very direction given for our future course: has it been already done; or, if not, shall we do it now? “ Yield yourselves unto God.”

It is requisite, in order that we may fulfil any command of God, that we fully understand its meaning: and in an expression, whose force obviously depends on the meaning of the word *yield*, it will be well to examine a few instances where this word is used in other places of Scripture.

We find, for instance, in Luke, ii. 22, this word is employed: “ When the days of her purification according to the law of Moses

were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord." "*Present him:*" you have the same word employed—"yield," or "present," yourselves to the Lord. They brought him, presented him, consecrated him to the Lord, as a sacrifice to the service of God, according to his own command. You find a similar expression, containing radically the same signification, though with somewhat a different idea, in Acts, xxiii. 23, 24: "The Roman governor called unto him two centurions, saying, Make ready," or present—set in order—"two hundred soldiers to go to Cæsarea, and horsemen three-score and ten, and spearmen two hundred, at the third hour of the night: and provide them beasts that they may set Paul on, and bring him safe unto Felix the governor." The same word is employed in Ephesians, v. 27, with precisely the same signification, preserving the radical force of the word: it is said that Christ gave himself to the church "that he might *present* it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing."

These passages sufficiently indicate the precise force of the word. It is to present ourselves to God as his servants, as altogether his property, wholly consecrated to him. We are to be his: he calls us to *yield* ourselves, or *present* ourselves to him. There are many similar passages which will occur to your recollection, serving to illustrate this command: as for instance, when it is said, "I beseech you therefore, by the mercies of God, that ye *present* your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God." "For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be the Lord both of the dead and of the living"—their ruler, their great proprietor. And again: "He died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." This is the meaning of the term: he calls us not to live unto ourselves, but to him that died for us; and to present ourselves a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is our reasonable service.

In order that this command of God may be impressed on our consciences, let us consider briefly the reasons why it is our duty to yield ourselves unto God.

In the first place, my brethren, *because he is absolute sovereign*, and we must do his will. It is his irresistible will that governs all things; it is his infinite mind that determines all events. He has not given us the power of withdrawing ourselves from the divine government: he has placed us in our present position that we should

be compelled to serve his purposes against our will, or serve them with our full consent. He never suspends his laws; he never stops one instant from that absolute dominion which he has over every being: but he has placed us in a position in which we are accountable for our conduct, and able to choose either to serve him with the full consent of our hearts, or else against our will to fulfil all his pleasure.

If, then, the Almighty is an infinitely powerful being, whose will is absolutely supreme, who does as he pleases in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand, none can resist him, but must accomplish all his purposes, as well the most material of all the events which occur as those which are most transitory and trifling, it is obviously the greatest folly, it is obviously the most dangerous condition, to have a will, systematically and habitually opposed to him in any respect. To live in opposition to our Master's will must be the greatest folly: there may certainly be the transient gratification of the feelings; but if we believe that God is the Supreme Being who governs and commands all, from the greatest to the most minute, then to oppose his will, and to persevere in that opposition, is surely to draw down upon us the most fearful consequences: on this ground we should yield ourselves to God, because we never can successfully oppose him, and to oppose him being to place ourselves in a position of the greatest danger.

We ought to yield ourselves to God *because he is of infinite excellence*. He not only must rule, and will rule, but we know that he ought to rule. Who should possess supreme power, who should govern all his rational creatures, to whom should they be absolutely subject, but to that Being who is wise, and generous, and patient, and kind, and faithful, and true, and infinitely so beyond all his creatures? To have his laws infringed, or to have his will interrupted, would be the most dangerous thing that could befall the universe. Not to do his will, to oppose ourselves to God instead of yielding to him, is as far as in us lies to mar the happiness of all creation, to make all creation wretched with ourselves; and this therefore involves in it the greatest presumption, folly, and wickedness. The greatest depravity of our nature is to resist his will, which above every thing else ought to be obeyed; and to disobey it, is to secure the destruction of our happiness: therefore should we yield ourselves to his will. Further, *God has absolute right to rule*. For whom ought all our faculties and all our powers to be employed but for Him who is

their maker? Did he not create us to accomplish his designs? Why then should those designs remain unfulfilled? For whom ought we to employ all that we have and all that we are, but the Being who is the great Benefactor of all? To what can we trace our blessings but to his bounty? He made these faculties; he made the objects around us, so exactly suited to our wants: every thing that contributes to our comfort and enjoyment comes from him; we merited them not: and since he has been so gracious to us, whom ought we to serve but him?

We ought also to consider that if *these faculties and blessings are preserved to us and bestowed upon us every moment*, it is in Him “we live, and move,” as well as “have our being.” If we have met together in peace and safety this day, it is because an unseen power has supported our existence, and is supporting it at this moment: and for whom should these faculties be employed, and to whom should our affections be consecrated, but to Him who every moment is thus caring for us? It is his wisdom, power, and goodness which sustain us in being; and surely we ought to yield ourselves to him.

But above all has he a right to rule over us, *because he has redeemed us*. It is to this that the Apostle again and again directs our attention. “I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” “To this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.” “He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.” Lately on the brink of destruction, exposed to the righteous anger of God, under a curse which we could neither endure nor avert, likely to be eternally destroyed, and richly meriting it all, we are this day blessed with cheering hope, have many hours of peaceful enjoyment, and know that this is only the prelude to happiness which will never end and will perpetually augment. That the Son of God should assume our nature, and expose himself to the humiliation of the cross, surely we must feel that, on this account, it is his due that all our powers that redeemed by his mediation should be employed in His service who redeemed them. Far less benefits and favours than these, bestowed by a fellow creature, would make us yield ourselves as debtors to him all our lives; far less benefits than these would make us feel that the surrender of all we have would be as nothing to testify our

gratitude. What, then, must be the ingratitude of those who, in the sight of all this mercy, can still remember that it is mercy addressed to the sinner no less than to the saint; and if there be any difference, it is because the sinner has rejected it. Then in the sight of all this mercy, to refuse to yield ourselves to God, and to become his servants, is ingratitude which nothing can measure.

Lastly, we ought to yield ourselves to God *because our best interests in time and in eternity are involved in this step*. Those who yield themselves unto God become his children, are taken into his favour, and to them he becomes a shield and an exceedingly great reward; they are supported, prepared, and from all evil effectually preserved; and he has secured to them all real enjoyment. To refuse to obey this command, therefore, is to refuse to be enriched by his bounty, to be preserved by his care, and to taste of his love: it is to refuse all peace of mind which has any just foundation, and all the glory which should animate those whom God has made for immortality.

On all these grounds we must see that it is our duty and our interest to yield ourselves up to God. Not to do so is the height of folly, because we resist One who will rule whether we choose it or not. Not to do so is the greatest depravity, because we are opposing the will and the government of One who is wise, and just, and good. Not to do so is the greatest ingratitude, because we are opposing His will who is our Creator, our Benefactor, our Preserver, and our Redeemer: and it is in violation of all our own best interests, and therefore is still more completely stamped with folly. These are some of the motives for which we are called to yield ourselves unto God.

Let us now consider THE EXTENT OF THIS COMMAND.

It does not mean that you are to submit your power, though you must do that. We may oppose the doctrines of grace; we may set at defiance the offers of divine mercy; we may maintain a rebellious independence of mind through our present lives; but we are still obliged eventually to submit to irresistible power. God will not suffer any of his creatures eventually to persevere in opposition to him; and therefore we are now, before that moment of compulsion comes, called to submit ourselves to that power, to feel that we are in the hands of One whom we cannot oppose, though men contrive most strangely to

forget, and sometimes audaciously to defy. But knowing, as we do, that we are under the eye of One who is omnipotent, who never did and never will resign his right to reign over us, we must not, we dare not, attempt to oppose his irresistible power. God's will must be done within us; and the more entirely we yield ourselves up to that, the better. Even if we have no hope from doing so, it would be wise; because to resist that power, to endeavour to struggle against the decrees of Him who is omnipotent, must only involve us in a deeper condemnation, and the more excite his anger: therefore, if there were no blessing, no positive good resulting from submission to him as a Being of almighty power, it would be the best course to yield ourselves up to irresistible power, and there leave ourselves in the hands of One of whom we knew not whether he would condemn or justify us, hate or love us, to eternity.

Nor is it that we are called upon to submit ourselves to the perfect excellences of God; we are called to do so, remembering—however awful the truth may be to all, however alarming it may be to some—that it is most certainly true that we are exposed to God's righteous anger: he would be perfectly justified if he condemned us each one for ever. If all the happiness of our existence were passed and there remained nothing but sorrow, God would be perfectly just. If the Lord were henceforth to cast us off for ever, he would be perfectly just. If he were to visit on us our past transgressions to all eternity, he would be perfectly just. If we were to reap the fruit of our doing in perpetually augmenting sorrow, we could have no right to complain. We are in the hands of a Being who has a perfect right, in justice, in mere justice, to do with us as he pleases. Imagination cannot depict sorrows worse than those which are most clearly, most certainly, our due, the due of all. Nor must we hope to evade it: our safety will be in yielding ourselves to God; not striving to palliate, not attempting to remove the charges which are brought against us in the least, but fully, completely, humbly, acknowledging all, hoping that the Almighty would be just, that he would do with us as he sees meet—either to cast us from him for ever, or to admit us to his presence; to leave us to the just and natural consequences of our own criminal opposition to his will, or in his infinite mercy to take us into his favour for ever. To yield ourselves to God implies all this; but, blessed be God, it is not all: what it means is, that we should yield ourselves to the whole will of God—to give up ourselves absolutely to the whole will of God.

Now, to see the nature of this duty, let us consider what is the declared will of God respecting his creatures.

It is his revealed will, that each sinner who hears the Gospel should believe on his Son, should acknowledge that he is a ruined creature, should place himself under the gracious care of the Redeemer, should look to his cross alone for justification and acceptance with God. It is the declared will of God that each sinner should look for sanctification of his nature through the work of the Holy Spirit of God in his heart, and should seek to have that inestimable gift. It is the will of God that each sinner who hears the Gospel should depend on him to bring him to everlasting happiness through the Lord Jesus Christ, and then eventually that he should be thus brought by grace to an unreserved obedience to the whole of His law who is our rightful Lord and King.

Now the heart naturally opposes every part of this scheme of salvation; there is repugnance to every duty which a sinner is called upon to perform. Men will not yield themselves to God's holy law, and will not devote to him the rest of their lives, according to his authority. Men feel the most fearful indisposition of heart to dependence on grace for the progressive sanctification of their nature and their lives. Men feel the greatest reluctance of heart to acknowledge that they are already destroyed by sin, ruined by transgression, and having no other hope but in the mercy of God. To cherish that repugnance is not to yield themselves to God; it is to oppose his declared will. But, on the contrary, to assent to this work heartily, to consent to this complete and simple reliance on him, to this exclusive dependence on grace, to this entire conformity through the power of God to his holy law—to do this heartily is to yield ourselves to him. It is this that he calls for; it is this command which the Divine Being addresses to every one who hears me to-day—"Yield yourselves to me; acknowledge fully that you are lost, depend exclusively on the Redeemer, look for your sanctification wholly from the work of my Spirit, and then aim to be under that influence, aim at an entire conformity of your will to the whole will of God." That is the command which comes direct to the conscience of every one who is opposing God: "Yield yourselves up to me." It is not to yield to irresistible power alone; it is not to yield to perfect excellency alone; but it is to yield to infinite mercy; it is to yield to all-conquering grace; it is to yield to the rightful authority of the best of Beings; it is to yield to Him who in his love is ready to save you. To yield the heart thus to him

and his declared will, is to be safe in Christ; it is to be under his gracious care, it is to be **one of his children**, it is to be an heir of glory.

But this is not all. The passage obviously means, *Present yourselves a living sacrifice to God*. While it requires us to resign ourselves absolutely to the whole will of God, it calls upon us to give him all our faculties, and to devote our affections to him. He has planted in us the powers of fear, of hope, of desire, of delight, of love: it is his will that all these affections, especially the master affection, love, should be occupied chiefly with him; we are to love him supremely, and all the rest will follow. "Give yourselves up to God," is the language of his command; "give your heart up entirely to your Maker; let him be the object of supreme adoration; love him, be grateful to him; and more than any other object engrosses your affections let him engross them." He who yields himself to God, yields all his property, his influence, his time, whatever he possesses; for it is God's. Men may endeavour to shrink from the obligation, but the obligation remains unchanged. If we are redeemed by the blood of Christ, we are his property, we and all we have. Never has the Christian the least right—and he must know he has none—to employ a minute, to employ the least fraction of his property, to employ any of his influence, his reason, his powers of body, or any thing that he possesses, except just as his Maker wills: and if the Lord has given a full direction of his will respecting the appropriation of all, then must the Christian appropriate them just as the Lord wills. This it is to yield ourselves to God: it is an easy yoke, a light burden, the road to happiness, the path of peace; for it is Wisdom's way, and all her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.

Brethren, when we reflect on the past year, comparing our conduct with this brief but energetic description of what it ought to be,—"Yield yourselves unto God"—do we not find abundant cause for the deepest regret? How much is there still of reluctance to live for God! How much is there yet remaining of that independence of heart which is the source of human sorrow! But if in this past year we find abundant cause for regret, is it to last through the year in which we are now entering? Just in proportion as we view with sorrow our many defects, ought we with resolution and earnestness show that we desire during the year on which we are now entering, that we may obtain a prompt and decisive improvement. Do you, Christian brethren, feel your weakness? Do you feel how

difficult it is, infirm as you are in yourselves, and placed in an evil world, to yield yourselves according to the divine command? Yes, my brethren, without One to help us this command would be unattended to by us: but the very voice that calls us to yield ourselves to God was the voice that summoned the dead man from his shroud and from his grave, and he came forth; it is that voice that said to the palsied arm, "Be stretched out," and its strength immediately revived; it is the same voice which bade his people of old to march through the bosom of the sea, and it cleft asunder to receive their hosts. And in that strength what cannot you also do! Receive his command in faith; remember that he gave his people the grace to do all this. If he gives the command to faith, he triumphs in that faith. It may be difficult, but there is a blessing in the achievement. O, how sweet, if we are able, in any measure, with fulness of purpose, to yield ourselves unto God. From this time consider solemnly the extent of the command; fix your minds upon this duty in all its real extent as applicable to yourselves. Let there be no wavering or hesitation: let each of us say to himself, "This is what I must be; I have no choice left; this is the way to my final peace; this is the only way in which to have a good conscience, and in which a peaceful mind may be maintained. It is the will of my God, my benefactor, my Redeemer, my chosen portion, my all: how can I have any will different from his? He has said that I must yield myself to him: by his help I will." Then often reflect on the numerous reasons why you should fulfil this command; and if it seem difficult, remember he knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust; and that, as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. Watch every effort after improvement, marking every secret resolve to do his will; and though, perhaps, the experience of another year shall not answer fully your hopes, yet still there is One above, who, having given us his Son, will with that gift bestow the pledge of all we need, and that he will listen to each resolution and to any prayer that is addressed to him, to fulfil his will.

The command in our text appears by the context distinctly to be addressed to the servants of God. But let me in conclusion remind those who may never hitherto have yielded themselves unto God, that it is not addressed to the servants of God alone. As it stands in the context, it may be a command specially addressed to his people; and there are those who would abstain from addressing the command to any others, saying, How is the command to do a spi-

ritual act, to be obeyed by those who have no disposition to fulfil it? If that were a just reason why a sinner should not be thus addressed, it is a just reason with regard to all of us; for it is a command wholly beyond our inclination to obey. But let it be ever remembered, that it is not to be obeyed in our own strength; our obligation is not measured by our moral obedience, otherwise duty might vanish from earth, and rebellion from God would become universal. Therefore it must be addressed to sinners, because it is the obligation of our perfect nature, and the obligation of a perfect being, however that nature and that being may have become depraved. What Adam was bound to do in serving and loving God, that you and I are bound to do. We are bound, because the law is perfect; we are bound, because the claims of God are just. We may lose all that there was of good in our nature, and become wholly depraved in heart; that loss is our crime, and will bring our punishment.

The Apostle James especially and expressly addresses the same command to sinners as it is now addressed by St. Paul to believers: "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded"—those who have no fixed purpose to serve God. Long before that had the Almighty urged the same duty by the prophet Ezekiel: "But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live. Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?" Those who are about to die, those who are perishing in sin, those who are rebelling against the Lord, are called to make them a new heart, and to renew a right spirit within them; these are called to break off from their transgressions, and to turn to God; these are commanded to draw nigh to God, that he may draw nigh to them; and, in language precisely similar to our text, to submit themselves to God.

Therefore, my dear brethren, if there be any amongst you to-day, who are conscious that you have never fulfilled these injunctions, I beseech you to remember that no weakness which you feel, no indisposition which you experience, can in the least diminish your obligation to obey them. You are bound this day to serve God: you are bound from this moment to be his servants, and subject to

his will, and have been all your lives. "Submit yourselves to me," is God's language to you this day by my voice, and I beseech you, in his name, that you do not make light of it: if you do, then remember that every day are you contracting fresh guilt before God; every hour is an hour of crime; every breath you draw is drawn in sin; you are every day refusing almighty mercy, you are every day trifling with almighty goodness, you are every day defying almighty vengeance. It is not safe, my brethren, to delay for another instant; and when so right to bethink you seriously of your condition as at the commencement of another year? One year has rolled away, seeing you living in rebellion against God; will another year pass in the same manner? Do you mean to live through this year without coming to God? The fact that you have lived so many years in this state is a fearful presentiment of what you will do hereafter: this new year will, perhaps, be added to your crimes. And what, my beloved brethren, have you spent and wasted already of God's? Is childhood passed—that happy state in which the mind is so docile, and in which the heart is so easily impressed; is it passed, and are you still unconverted? Is youth passed, too—that time for leisure and reflection, when there are so few engrossing duties, and when there is so much time for personal improvement; is that gone too, that blessed time in which conversion so frequently takes place, and are you still unconverted? Is vigorous manhood gone too—the time of action, the only time in which you can most usefully serve God, and are you still unconverted, with nothing but the mere dregs of life remaining? My brethren, what have you lost! How many years have been wasted—what opportunities have been slighted! What, during all these years, must be your accumulation of guilt before God, because you would not yield yourselves to his service! And now what is before you? Will this year be added to the past? Is it not reasonable to yield yourselves to God? Is there any one whose feelings are so blunted, or whose conscience is so seared, that he can say this moment, "It is not my duty to yield myself to the will of my Maker?" Every thing would contradict the sentiment if it arose for a moment in the heart; every man feels that his heart is wholly perverted—that he ought to be the Lord's. Do you feel that you will not yield yourselves? Is that the feeling of mind of any person who has lived ten, fifteen, twenty, forty, years without loving and serving God? Are you resolved that you will still do your own pleasure rather than the pleasure of God? What rebellion is that! You *will* offend against God! What rebellion is *that*, when

God is loading you with his favours daily, and is willing to make you happy, that you should deliberately say, I will not so much as strive to give my whole heart and my whole life up to God! Is there any one who will go from this house of prayer, and will go to the ordinary employments of life, and say, I will not yield my whole heart and my whole life up to God? If you do so you must know that your sentence will be just, whatever that sentence is.

But perhaps you say, I cannot do it. You do not feel so daring and defying that you will venture to say, "I cannot do it: I wish that a thing so impossible might take place; I wish I could go from this church to give up my heart to God, and to serve him the rest of my days: I wish I could receive the whole Gospel, and that he might approve all my future course: but I cannot." And where is the hinderance? "I cannot:" what is the meaning of that answer? I cannot—I love sin too much; I am too indifferent to my Maker's commands; I am too much bound down by the things of time; I am so wholly absorbed by earth, that I cannot; I have no love to God; I have lost all that was holy in my nature; and therefore I cannot. And does this diminish guilt? Diminish it, perhaps it may; bad as this condition is, it is not so daring, it is not so full of corruption as to determine upon not making the slightest effort. But, brethren, I entreat you not to be deceived; for there is in all this no excuse whatever: you must know the hinderance to be in your heart; and the only thing that hinders being at once saved and blessed in Christ, can be no sufficient allegation at the bar of judgment why you would not. And therefore I do entreat you, if you would be happy in eternity with those who are Christians around you, if you would be brought as one family into the presence of our Father in heaven for ever, I beseech you turn all the difficulties in your way, and the corruption which seems to pervade your whole soul, turn them into a more powerful inducement for seeking the interposition of the Divine Being who came to seek and to save those who were lost, those who were farthest gone from holiness, happiness, and heaven. You are commanded to yield yourselves to God, because it is your duty; but you have lost the disposition to it: seek it from Him; depend only on the work of your Saviour for your acceptance; depend only on the grace of the Spirit for your conversion; depend only on the Almighty God for your everlasting welfare. Plead as a humble suppliant before him till his everlasting arms are placed around him for your safety; and you shall hear him say, though agitated by many a doubt, "Fear not; I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward."

THE BEATITUDES—PERSECUTION FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS' SAKE.

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 "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake : for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."—MATTHEW, v. 10.

WHAT are those persecutions? Such is the present inquiry, of which the happy tendency is to render us blessed. It will be unnecessary, in conducting this investigation, to state, that the blessed promise of the text applies not to any of those persecutions which we may be said to bring upon ourselves by our own follies and sins, and which are so open to common observation, that they need not any particular detail to prove. The beatitude is annexed only to those persecutions to which every good and faithful man is subjected in bearing the cross of Christ, and in maintaining a conscience void of offence, and a conduct free from reproach, amid the complicated trials and temptations with which every step of his course and every path of his life are beset in the present world. This is a general proposition; and I will now endeavour to prove it by an induction of particular instances, in which its truth will be exhibited. Without further preface, then, but just beseeching you to pay that measure of attention to the words to be spoken, which can alone, through God, render them of any avail to your personal improvement, I proceed to prove the leading point of the present discourse, viz. What those persecutions are, which render us blessed. They are of various kinds, and I shall enumerate them in order.

The first of which I shall speak is, that of which mention is made in the text, when a good and faithful Christian is called upon "to suffer for righteousness' sake." We are then called upon to do so, when we are placed in circumstances in which we must maintain, pure and undefiled, the character of our religious principles, and suffer no strength of temptation, and no accumulation of trials, to induce us to swerve from our allegiance to God, and our duty to Christ. To this kind of persecution not a day, shall I add, not an

hour, scarcely passes, without something or other occurring to subject us to its strength and virulence. Instances must present themselves to you innumerable in your daily walk through life. Is not your nature corrupt, and your heart continually prone to evil—to comply with *this* temptation, and to yield to *this* or *that* passion? Strictly speaking, the persecution to which you are subjected from the innate propensity to evil in your nature, is constant and unintermitted. When you would do good, how often, alas! is evil present with you; and how disciplined must that faith, and well regulated must that mind be, which is exposed to persecution or trials, and yet, for the sake of righteousness, or, in other words, for the triumph of Christian principle, suffers not; or, to express the sentiment in different terms, maintains its consistency unimpaired, and its conduct unrebuked. The Christian life being one of continual warfare (With whom? With a corrupt nature, and with evil propensities within) may be said to be one which calls for a constant demand of suffering for righteousness' sake. Not upon any parting pressing emergency, not in any particularly great difficulty, but *on all occasions*: in the every-day transactions of life—in your domestic circles, and with your respective relations, countless circumstances will occur in which you are called upon to exhibit the Christian temper, and, in a word, to suffer for righteousness' sake, for the triumph of Christian principle. I shall perhaps make myself better understood, if I illustrate my meaning by a particular and familiar instance. Every thing is not happy or comfortable within the domestic circle. You have to deal with a relative, who is perverse in temper, and obstinate in conduct. His singularities or his vices are a constant source of provocation to you. To your mildness, he opposes rudeness of speech—to your gentleness, grossness of manner. What, but persecution, is this? Now how is a real Christian to conduct himself in such an unhappy situation?—a situation in which, more or less, the members of most families are placed. Is rudeness to be returned for rudeness, and passion for passion? No; for the sake of righteousness, the enduring temper and the suffering virtue must be illustrated: and in the forbearance and the patience with which we submit to this domestic vexation, we must display the triumph of the Christian temper, and the meekness of the Christian spirit, and, in a word, suffer for righteousness' sake. But you say, You have given an instance, in which few would, or could be able to afford such a display of temper for the sake of religion. To which I answer, whether or no I have done so, may be a question;

but it is no question that you ought to act as I have recommended in this and in every other similar case of trial or persecution; and that if you fail thus to act, I know not how it can be said that you are persons to whom they can have a happy tendency of making you blessed. A case may occur in which a man is called upon to suffer for righteousness' sake, and yet be unrighteous himself; therefore it behoves him not only to have a good cause, but also a pure conscience—a conscience void of offence both towards God and towards man. If he possesses this consciousness, it will enable him to suffer with comfort, and march with as much cheerfulness to endure his cross, as it would to receive his crown. On the contrary, he who suffers with a bad conscience, though in a good cause, has neither comfort to support himself here, nor reward to anticipate hereafter.

Secondly: Persecution may then be said to be blessed to him, who has a real call to suffer, and has a good end in suffering. When the Almighty opens a door by which a persecuted Christian may escape from suffering, he certainly has a right to embrace the opportunity. But when he is seized and brought before kings and rulers for the testimony of Jesus Christ; and when the case is such that either he or the truth must suffer, then he has an undoubted call to suffer, and by suffering to obtain a martyr's name. This is the sense in which the word *call* is used; and, thus understood, it may be said that every individual has a *call* of this kind; in other words, it is his duty to show forth to the world the purity of his Christian principles, whatever be the persecution, or ridicule, or opposition to which he may expose himself, and to maintain them with a firm and inflexible spirit. He is not unnecessarily to court, but to endure, whatever has been imposed upon him, and his call to bear the yoke of the Christian precepts, and to take up the cross, will be obeyed, through evil report, and good report. His Christian humility will exclude all bold and enthusiastic pretensions, and the same mind which was in Christ Jesus, will also be in him, in the meek and submissive bearing of it.

Thirdly: The persecuted are blessed, who, through their sufferings seek to glorify God, to show their love to Christ, and to set their seal to the truth of his Gospel. It may be truly said of the primitive Christians, that they burned more in love than in the fire. Their eye was on Him who suffered greater things for their salvation; and they were willing to endure the utmost extremity of suffering that their enemies could inflict, so that his kingdom might flourish, and

his glory be exalted. Nothing could exceed the purity of this feeling by which they were transported. Now this is persecution for "righteousness' sake," which, illustrated as it was in them by purity of life, will entitle the martyr to a martyr's crown, even a crown which fadeth not away.

Fourthly: Persecution is blessed when "we suffer as Christians, and are not ashamed." When called to suffer, we must possess such a spirit as becomes a Christian. We are called upon to suffer daily, and if we possess that becoming spirit, we shall display it in our ordinary intercourse with our friends. To suffer as Christians, implies humility of spirit, and resignation of soul, and integrity of life. Now, in the lot of every individual, there is something which calls for the exercise of the Christian temper. Do we bear this species of suffering, whatever it be, with a cheerful mind, and with an unmurmuring spirit? In reference to every thing that is hard and unpleasant in our lot, is this the language of our lips, dictated by the feeling of our hearts, "My heavenly Father has given me this cup to drink, this cross to bear, or this suffering to endure. He knows that it is for my good, and shall I not drink it?" Cheerfulness is displayed in taking up, as patience is illustrated in bearing, the cross. Christ suffered cheerfully for us. His death was a free-will offering; and in this we are to imitate him. Cheerfulness perfumes martyrdom, and makes it a sacrifice, of which the fragrance is sweet-smelling in the sight of God. When the apostles had been brought before the High Priest and council of the Jews, they departed from it, "rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus." We must imbibe the feeling by which they were animated, and with joyfulness of spirit bear the cross that is imposed upon us, and look upon the sufferings to which we are appointed in our earthly lot, rather in the light of a favour conferred, than as a calamity inflicted, when we are thus called to bear witness to the truth.

In suffering as a Christian, we are to imitate the examples of our divine Master and his disciples, in praying "for them who despitefully use and persecute us." Christ, on the cross, preached a most impressive lecture on the duty of forgiveness, and prayed for his murderers; and the proto-martyr Stephen, in his death, for his bloody persecutors—a prayer by which the conversion of some was effected. We also ought to pray for our persecutors. We owe them a debt of gratitude. In their minds our ruin was contemplated; but by their acts our good has been accomplished; for every reproach

we suffer for Christ adds to our honour, and every injury we sustain renders our crown more weighty and splendid. This is the suffering which will make us blessed, and give lustre to our crown in heaven ! Hence we may learn the true nature of Christianity. It consists in *holiness*, as well as in *suffering*. A real Christian must carry Christ in his heart, and the cross on his shoulders. The Cyrenian bearing the cross is a figure of what a Christian should do daily. Whether he will or not, it will be forced upon him, and he must be compelled to bear it. "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution," says St. Paul to Timothy. And what saith our Lord ? "In the world ye shall have revelation." This is the legacy you see bequeathed to all the followers of the Lamb. It is too much for a Christian to have two heavens—one here, and another hereafter. Christ had them not ; and if the head of the Master was crowned with thorns, it is surely too much to expect that the brows of the servants should be crowned with roses. Do not the shield of faith, the sword of the Spirit, the helmet of hope, and the breast-plate of patience, all imply that the Christian's life is a state of warfare, and that these are the weapons with which he must enter the field, and sustain the contest ? Do they not intimate that, to secure the prize, he must fight, and that, to win the trophies of victory, great exertion is to be made, and much of toil and suffering is to be endured ? This offensive or defensive apparatus must be put on by every Christian warrior, and none can claim an exemption from the fatigues and sufferings which are incident to a campaign against the world, the flesh, and the devil. We would all be God's gold. Well ; but to have the gold pure in his sight, it must pass through the crucible, and in the fiery ordeal be refined from the dross with which it is alloyed. This process must be undergone, before we shall be esteemed as fit for the Master's use, and be as the current coin of Christ's realm. We are all for reigning with Christ ; but we forget what the primary requirement is, that we must first suffer with him.

Hence, for our comfort, we also learn, that persecution is not a mark of God's anger and resentment ; for he pronounces those blessed who are persecuted. We may be tempted to imagine that such are hated and forsaken of God ; but it is far otherwise : for, if they are blessed who die *in* the Lord, surely they must be blessed who die *for* the world. When the barbarians saw the viper fasten on Paul's hand, they concluded that he must be a murderer. And thus when we see God's people afflicted, we are ready to infer that they are greater sinners than others, and forget that fine rebuke of

our Lord, "Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? Or those eighteen upon whom the tower of Saloam fell and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt at Jerusalem?" In other words, draw no such unrighteous inferences, but go, and "except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Persecution, sustained by righteous persons in a righteous cause, is a badge of honour, and a pledge of his love; "for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."

Fifthly: Here we have a severe rebuke given to those who are unwilling to suffer for Christ, and are offended when persecution, because of the word, arises. Many will profess Christ, but will not follow him, when the rod of chastising is raised, and the fire of persecution is lighted. When they behold the palm-branches and the garments spread in his way, and hear the multitude shouting Hosannas, they will join in the throng; but when the swords and the staves appear, their hearts will wax faint, and their yea, yea, become nay, nay! They will basely desert their Master, and, like the disciples, forsake him and fly. So much for a religion built on the sand, which persecution's waves will undermine and destroy. There is much reason to believe that there are many among us who, were persecution to arise for conscience sake, would prefer the good things of this world to the future riches of eternity, if the condition upon which the wealth of the heavenly kingdom was to be attained, was by sufferings. And yet through no other medium will its possession be realized—none of the riches of God be enjoyed. If we will really show ourselves to be Christians, we shall not hesitate to throw ourselves upon the boisterous waters of this troublesome world, assured that those only are the waters over which our vessel must pass to the harbour of eternal calm and safety—that, if steered well, it will reach in security the port, through the good pilot to whom had been confided our bark; and amid every trouble arising from the waves and persecution of the world, we should always bear in mind this awful and impressive saying of our Lord, "Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven!"

Here we may also observe a sharp reproof to the opposers of Christ's kingdom, and the persecutors of its true subjects. They know not what they do, nor consider the heinousness of the sin of which they are guilty. They "resist the Holy Ghost." They affront Christ in heaven—they trample on his jewels—they touch

the apple of his eye, and pierce his side. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" When the foot was trodden upon the head cried out. And as the sin of persecuting God's people is great, so also is the punishment denounced against it great. Can we suppose that Christ will not avenge the blood of those who die in his cause? Attend to these words, spoken by the angel of the waters concerning such persecutors: "They have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink, for they are worthy." Numberless are the instances in which God has visibly punished the persecutors of his people, even in this world. The Emperor Diocletian, a cruel persecutor of the primitive Christians, ordered their churches to be razed, their Bibles to be burned, and their bodies to undergo the most cruel tortures. What was his end? He became a maniac, and a self-destroyer. How different the end of the saint and the sinner! the persecutor and persecuted for righteousness' sake! The one may find his way through the wilderness of this world rough and rugged, and his path strewn with briars and thorns; he may have to encounter seas of difficulty, and to wade through oceans of blood, before he reaches the heavenly Canaan: but, oh! what a glorious rest! what a blessed calm! what unbounded bliss awaits him in the celestial country! There every thing wears an aspect of serenity—no clouds to obscure, and no sights to dismay his vision—a perfect, undisturbed, settled tranquillity—no enemy to peace to assail—no persecutor to torment—no sorrow to pierce—no pain to afflict—no sin to disturb—no death to torture and alarm him! The tears, which the scenes of humanity caused him to shed on earth, are all wiped from the eyes in heaven: a new song is put into his mouth—the song of Moses and the Lamb, which lips, in sweet harmony with the tongues of angels, warble forth daily; and, in the bosom of his Father and his God, an uninterrupted happiness and an eternal repose are enjoyed. Such honours, such blessedness, have all his saints!

O, who would not aspire after them! Who would not put forth all his powers to possess such privileges, and realize such bliss! Who would not lead the life of a true Christian on earth, that he might be as the angels in heaven! It is in your power to be as they are. But you must imbibe their temper, before you can enter on their services, and on earth do God's will, before you can do it with them in heaven. Then be Christians, not in name, but in reality. Take up the cross, and in the bearing of it, show a mind, which already seems to have caught a portion of theirs in glory. Bear it with

meekness, and disarm persecution's power by the firm and unwavering spirit with which you support the yoke, and steadfastly maintain the integrity of your Christian principles, in opposition to the sneers, or ridicule, or persecution of an apostate and unbelieving world. Yield not an instant to it, nor deny before men Him who hath bought you with a price—even the price of his own precious blood. Remember the doom of such as thus repudiate the Redeemer: them will he deny before the Father in heaven—in other words, forever exclude from his presence, and banish from his kingdom. Shun then the ways of such, and tread not in the steps of the ungodly! but be ye followers of those, who, through faith and patience, have sought for, and have obtained the promises. Amen.

INDEX.

ALPHABETICAL ARRANGEMENT OF PREACHERS.

PREACHER.	SUBJECT.	PAGE
BAKER, T. B., A.M.	Christ Manifested to Destroy the Works of the Devil	101
BINNEY, T.	The Church a Testimony for God to the World	141
BLACKEURN, J.	The Nature and Design of a Divine Revelation.....	273
	<i>Pentonville.</i>	
BURNET, J.	The Spiritual Nature of True Religion	345
	<i>Camberwell.</i>	
COOPER, W. H.	The Claims of Ireland	65
	<i>Dublin.</i>	
DALE, T., A.M.	The Children of the World and the Children of Light	41
-----	The Believer's Present Ignorance and Future Illumination	381
ELLABY, F., A.M.	The Tares of the Field	131
EVANS, J. H., A.M.	The Walk of Faith a Way of Pleasantness and Peace	1
-----	The Best Gifts of God Bestowed on his People	189
HUGHES, H., A.M.	The Lord the Christian's Inheritance	169
LEIFCHILD, J.	The Character Described in the Seventh Chapter of the	
	<i>Craven Chapel.</i> Romans	286
MEADOWS, F. W.	The Earthly Tabernacle and the Heavenly Inheritance ..	53
MELVILL, H., B.D.	Serving the Lord Christ	25
-----	Hearers Judged by Sermons	85
-----	Every Baptized Man a Priest of God.....	213
-----	The Concurrent Testimony of the Spirit and the Believer	309
MORTIMER, T., B.D.	The Minister's Farewell Entreaty	180
-----	The Kingdom of God and His Righteousness	239
-----	Christian Doctrine, Duty, Privilege, and Hope	257
-----	The Minister's Parting Prayer	265
MYERS, T., A.M.	God Honouring the Righteous	325
NOEL, HON. B. W., A.M.	God's Goodness called to Mind.....	159
-----	The Renunciation of Evil Habits Contemporaneous with	
	the Application for Mercy	229
-----	Yielding Ourselves unto God	105

PREACHER.	SUBJECT.	PAGE
NOEL, HON. G. T., A.M.	The Missionary's Message Suited to All	393
PEARSON, J. W., A.M. . .	Sorrow for the Departed Vindicated	201
	<i>Islington.</i>	
POPE, A.	Fellowship with Christ	356
ROBINS, S., A.M.	The Accountableness Incurred by the Ministry of the Gospel	13
-----	Unspirituality, its Signs, Evils, and Remedy	245
RUDGE, J., D.D.	The Beatitudes—Evidences of Poverty of Spirit	151
	<i>Hawkechurch.</i>	
-----	The Beatitudes—Persecution for Righteousness' Sake	417
SHERMAN, J.	Believers Complete in Christ	121
-----	To Sunday School Teachers	300
-----	" Called of God "	365
WILLIAMS, J., A.B.	The Claims of England upon Christians, and Specially upon Churchmen	335

INDEX.

BIBLICAL ARRANGEMENT OF TEXTS.

TEXT.	PREACHER.	PAGE
Genesis, xlvii. 5, 6	REV. J. H. EVANS, A.M.	189
Deuteronomy, x. 9	— H. HUGHES, A.M.	169
Judges, xvi. 28	— T. MORTIMER, B.D.	265
1 Samuel, ii. 30	— T. MYERS, A.M.	325
Psalms xxxiv. 11	— J. SHERMAN	300
Proverbs, iii. 17	— J. H. EVANS, A.M.	1
Isaiah, i. 16—18	HON. AND REV. B. W. NOEL, A.M.	229
— xliii. 12	REV. T. BINNEY	141
Jeremiah, iii. 19	HON. AND REV. B. W. NOEL, A.M.	159
Matthew, v. 3	REV. J. RUDGE, D.D.	151
— v. 10	— — — — —	417
— vi. 33	— T. MORTIMER, B.D.	239
— xiii. 36—44	— F. ELLABY, A.M.	131
Luke, i. 33	— W. H. COOPER	65
— i. 70	— J. BLACKBURN	273
— viii. 52	— J. W. PEARSON, A.M.	201
— xvi. 8	— T. DALE, A.M.	41
John, iv. 24	— S. ROBINS, A.M.	245
— xii. 47, 48	— H. MELVILL, B.D.	85
Acts, xvi. 32, 33	HON. AND REV. G. T. NOEL, A.M.	393
Romans, vi. 13	— — — — — B. W. NOEL, A.M.	405
— vii. 22—25	REV. J. LEIFCHILD	286
— viii. 16	— H. MELVILL, B.D.	309
— viii. 30	— J. SHERMAN	365
1 Corinthians, xiii. 12	— T. DALE, A.M.	381
— xv. 25	— W. H. COOPER	65

TEXT.	PREACHER.	PAGE
2 Corinthians, ii. 15, 16	REV. S. ROBINS, A.M.	13
———— v. 1	F. W. MEADOWS	53
Ephesians, iv. 1—6	T. MORTIMER, B.D.	180
Philippians, iii. 10	A. POPE.	356
Colossians, ii. 10	J. SHERMAN	121
———— iii. 23, 24	H. MELVILL, B.D.	25
1 Peter, ii. 5	J. BURNET	345
———— ii. 9	————	213
———— iv. 10	J. WILLIAMS, A.B.	336
1 John, ii. 24, 25	T. MORTIMER, B.D.	257
———— iii. 8	T. B. BAXER, A.M.	101

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